

A RIDE THROUGH  
WESTERN ASIA





THE SHAH RETURNING TO TEHERAN.

# A RIDE THROUGH WESTERN ASIA

BY  
CLIVE BIGHAM

*WITH ILLUSTRATIONS*

London  
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED  
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY  
1897



RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,  
LONDON AND BUNGAY.

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## NOTE

THE author of the following volume, who had previously served in the Grenadier Guards, held after he made the journey which is here described and until recently the appointment of Honorary Attaché to the British Embassy at St. Petersburg. He has now gone out to the seat of war as a correspondent for one of the principal English newspapers, and the publishers have to thank the Hon. T. W. Legh, M.P., for having kindly undertaken to see the book through the press in his absence.

*May, 1897.*



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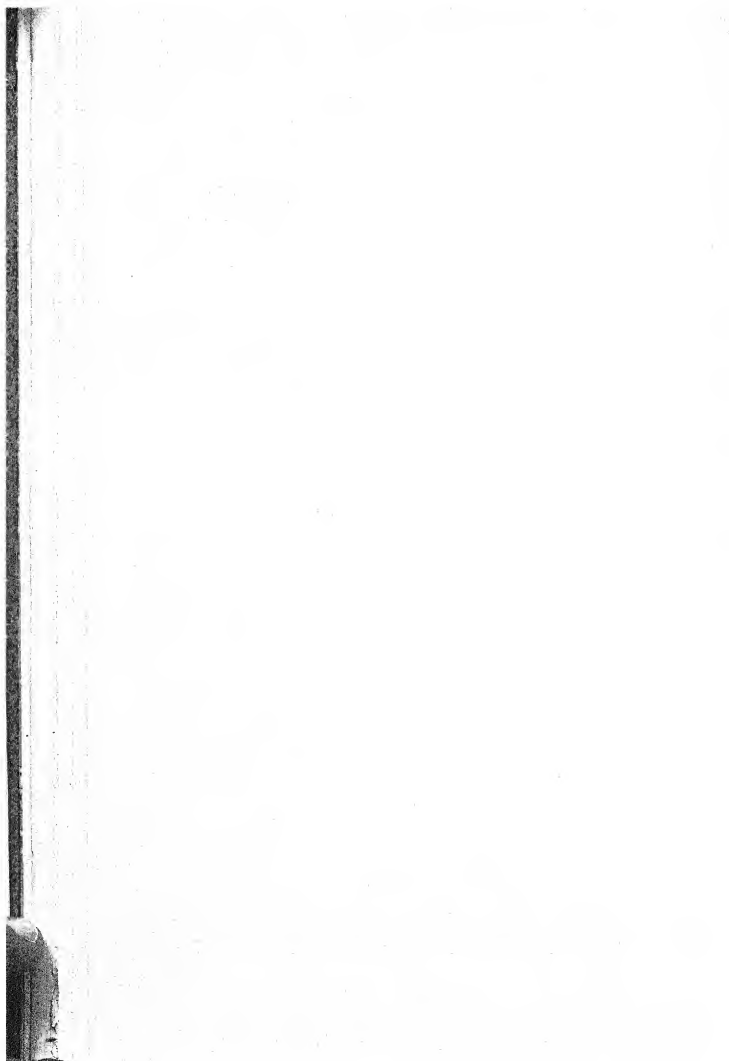


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PART I  
*ASIA MINOR*



F.98



# A RIDE THROUGH WESTERN ASIA

## CHAPTER I

### LONDON TO CONSTANTINOPLE

TOWARDS the end of June, 1895, the troubles in Armenia had reached an acute stage. Asia Minor was reported to be closed, and an Irade had been issued by the Sultan forbidding all Europeans from entering the Asiatic provinces of Turkey north of the Lebanon until further orders, that is, until the disturbances were over. These circumstances invested a visit to Armenia with the additional charm of apparently insuperable difficulty. Anxious to travel in a country which was playing a leading part in European politics, I resolved to make the attempt. But I hardly realised what the obstacles were until I consulted the few people I knew who happened to be conversant with Turkish affairs, and who all told me that my project was impossible. It was only owing to remarkable good luck that it proved the

reverse and that I spent my summer in the heart of Armenia.

The first thing to consider was the best way of entering Asia Minor. There were four possible routes which represented roughly the four points of the compass. The first was the most direct, across the Bosphorus, and through Anatolia to Erzerum, which is practically the capital of Armenia. Hardly any one had gone this way since Burnaby, and it was considered folly to attempt it, firstly because it necessitated a direct start from Constantinople, where the officials would be on the alert, and secondly because it meant travelling through a most disaffected part of the country, along a line of towns in each of which a powerful Pasha would probably try to prevent my going further. The second route was the ordinary one—by boat to Trebizond, and thence by road to Erzerum. Two British officers anxious to see Armenia had lately made an attempt to get through this way, but at Trebizond they had been politely reshipped for Constantinople, our Consul informing them that it was impossible for them to continue their journey. The third route was by sea to Alexandretta, and thence overland to Diabekr. This way is long, hot, and dangerous. It had, moreover, been tried by the correspondent of a well-known newspaper, who must have been well equipped with money, influence, and knowledge of the country, and he had been arrested and ignominiously sent back to his starting-point. A further argument against this route was a report that

cholera was raging in the southern provinces of Anatolia. The fourth way, recommended by an experienced traveller, was to go to Batum on the eastern shore of the Black Sea, and from there—if it were found impossible to penetrate into Erzerum by the Kars road, where the Turks were on the look-out—to go south by post to Khoi or Tabreez in north-western Persia. From there it would be easy to strike west over the mountains, and slip into the villayet of Bitlis or Van. The objection to this plan was that even given safe arrival in Kurdestan, a foreigner would be an object of suspicion at once, and would run a risk of being imprisoned by the Turks. The natives in those parts are exceptionally lawless, and the journey was longer than any of the others proposed. Practically there was little to choose between the four routes on the score of difficulty. All seemed hopeless, the first one being perhaps the most so. Yet it was by this way that I succeeded in getting into the very centre of Armenia within a month of my leaving London. I had no particular design in choosing this way. It simply occurred to me that there were people in Constantinople who could give me much needed information, and it was in any case the best starting-place, and that was why I decided to go there.

I left London on June 22nd, caught the Orient Express at Chalons, and after staying twenty-four hours in Vienna, where I had to deliver some Foreign Office despatches, I set out for Constan-

tinople, which I reached on the 26th. I spent two days in the city sight-seeing, and then went up to Therapia on the Bosphorus, where the Embassy and most of the British residents live in the summer. I soon discovered that any official application for leave to travel in Asia Minor would be refused, and that my only chance, a poor one at best, was to endeavour to get an ordinary travelling passport, or "tezkereh" such as Ottoman subjects apply for.

One day, accompanied by an old Jew interpreter, I found my way to the great rambling police office in Stambul, where these tezkerehs are issued. Here after much struggling and pushing in one dirty room after another, each one full of Mussulman clerks writing on their laps and surrounded by clamouring Turks and Armenians, I managed to get a document with some Turkish characters on it, and the Sultan's signature lithographed at the top. This, the Jew told me, would take me to Angora, to which place there is a single line, and one train daily, the pace of which never exceeds sixteen miles an hour. Still it is quicker than either riding or driving. The chances were that I should be sent straight back to Constantinople from Angora, but I thought the attempt at getting further into the country from there worth making.

Armed with my tezkereh I set about making preparations for the journey. In this I was helped by Colonel Chermide, our late Military Attaché in Turkey, and one of the most travelled and best informed men in the Ottoman Empire. I had

brought from London, in addition to a few clothes, a Wolseley valise, an old saddle, a pair of canvas saddle bags, an india-rubber bath, a revolver, and a gun, but I had to buy in Constantinople all those things which are necessities when travelling in a country where there are neither roads nor inns.

In a French shop called the "Économique," I bought two saucepans, a cooking-pot, a kettle, a basin, knives and forks, a few tin cups and canisters, a tea-pot, marmalade, potted meat, tea, brandy, chocolate, curry powder and Keating's powder. In a Greek shop at Galata, I purchased some cartridges, which proved villainous, and in the leather market at Stambul two large leather boxes covered with canvas, which were a great success. These boxes are called khorgines. They have broad straps let into their backs just below the hinges of the lid by which they can be slung together over a horse's pack-saddle, when driving is impossible. In Asia Minor I was able to keep the same cart for my luggage and servant the whole time, but from Bayazid on the borders of Persia the going was all on horseback, and the khorgines were very useful.

These preparations occupied nearly a week, and then I was obliged to look out for a servant. This was a difficulty. It is almost impossible to find a Turkish dragoman, that is, a pure Turk who can talk any European language, and will travel as a servant. As yet I knew little Turkish, and it would be hard to make myself understood by a Turk who



had no knowledge of any but his own tongue. Armenians and Greeks are plentiful enough, but I did not care to take one, for an Armenian would have been a needless source of danger on my travels, and a Greek servant is proverbially dishonest. I decided on a Turk, thinking it better to have a servant I could not understand than one who was a thief, and also because I wanted to learn the Turkish language as quickly as possible. Colonel Cherm-side again came to my help, and recommended a Turk called Murad. He had been groom to Mr. Block, the first dragoman in the British Embassy, and had travelled with him in Asia Minor.

Murad came up to Therapia to see us. He was a solid, hardy-looking man of about forty, dressed in the short blue jacket, baggy trousers, finishing in unbuttoned spats, and voluminous cummerbund which make up the typical Cavass dress. He wore a fez, and in the folds of his belt carried a curved knife, and many things besides. The conversation was conducted by Colonel Cherm-side, as though Murad professed to know "Bir az ingliz," I soon found it only amounted to the words,—"one-and-a-half," "two-and-a-half," "pepper" and "salt." That was all the English I recognised during the three months he was with me, although he may have known more than he wished me to think. He had besides an amusing stock of Levantine words, a cross between French and Italian, such as "paletot," "baño," "locanda," "soldatt," and others. I agreed to hire him at £4 a month. It

seemed expensive, but he served me excellently and proved himself worthy of his hire. Not only was he a good groom and a fair vet., but he could cook well, mend my clothes, and wriggle out of every difficulty.

Murad engaged, I had to think next of money and horses. Mr. Evans, at that time sub-director of the Régie, the great tobacco monopoly of Turkey, gave me a letter of credit in French and Turkish on the various dépôts of the institution which are scattered over nearly all the small towns in Asia Minor, and this I found more easily negotiable than any draft I could have got from the Imperial Ottoman Bank, which has comparatively few provincial branches. I took a letter of introduction to the British Consul at Angora, and Colonel Chermside wrote to the Consul at Erzerum telling him of my intended visit, although no one thought at that time that I should get beyond Angora. I deferred buying a horse until I arrived at the latter place.

It was the 19th of July before I went back to the hotel at Constantinople preparatory to starting for Angora. I had to wait two days more before Murad obtained his *tezkereh*. Every day the reports from Armenia grew more exciting, and the murder of Stambulof and the consequent disturbances in Macedonia threatened a collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The Sadr Azam, or Grand Vizier, was said to have issued stringent orders against any Europeans, and particularly Englishmen, entering Asia Minor, and my friends told me I should pro-

bably be sent back directly I had crossed the Bosphorus, and should be extremely lucky if I reached Angora. But I was proof against all persuasions to wait a little longer, and at last on July 21 we started, fully expecting to be back in a few days.

Before closing this chapter it may be worth while to describe briefly the country and people I was going to see. Armenia, roughly speaking, comprises the villayets of Erzerum, Bitlis, Van, and Kharput, besides parts of Trebizond, Sivas, and Diarbekr, all in Asia Minor; the provinces of Kars, Erivan, and Elizabetpol in Caucasia, and the greater part of Azerbaijan in Persia. According to tradition, Armenia was the first country inhabited after the Deluge, the first king being Haik, great-grandson of Japhet. In historic times Tigranes the ally of Cyrus and Mithridates were well known Armenian monarchs. In the Middle Ages Tamerlane and subsequently Shah Abbas devastated the country, and the latter carried off many of its inhabitants to colonise Julfa the great Armenian city of Persia, situated near Ispahan.

The Armenian people are certainly one of the oldest Aryan races existing, although they now only compose one-seventh of the population of their country, sharing their inheritance with Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Persians, and Russians. There are about six millions of them scattered over the face of the world.

Christianity was introduced by St. Jude, but in

the sixth century the Armenian Church severed its connection with the Byzantine patriarchs. This rupture was probably detrimental to the Armenians, for now according to Binning (*Travels in Persia*), "like most Asiatic Christians they do the faith they profess no credit, and their Christianity seems to be quite nominal." They are almost entirely ignorant of their religion. Their Bible and sacred books are written in the ancient tongue which none but the priests understand. Still in secular matters they are a remarkably clever people, excellent linguists, and intelligent traders. But when this is said all is said, and their other characteristics are just those which an Englishman dislikes. Astute and subtle, they possess in Asia a reputation very similar to that enjoyed by the Jews in Europe. Their uncleanly habits, their strong disposition to lying and cowardice, account in part for the hatred cherished for them by the Turks. On the other hand, for centuries they have been the victims of tyrannous oppression, and in our own time their treatment has aroused the indignation of Europe.

## CHAPTER II

### ANGORA

ON the morning of July 21 Murad, who had at last got his passport, came round to the hotel just before five, and we engaged two "hammals" (porters) to carry the boxes through the tortuous streets of Galata to the Bridge of Boats. These hammals are an important feature in Constantinople. Many of them are Armenians, and they suffered particularly in the last massacre (September, 1896). They form a sort of guild, and seem quite indifferent to the weight of their load. At the Bridge we found ourselves in a crowd of Greeks, Jews, Armenians and Turks all getting tickets. My ignorance of Turkish caused some trouble over mine. Murad told me exactly what to say, in the paternal tone he adopted to me from the first, but I found it difficult to frame the words. After having secured the tickets and labelled the luggage, we still had to wait nearly an hour before we moved off from the Bridge. The Golden Horn looked beautiful in the early morning sun, glittering and still with the stillness of the dawn. Then all round us ships began to move,

and the quay woke into life. The fascination of the scene was increased by the magic colours of an eastern sunrise. I shall never forget the deep blue of the Marmora—my last view of the sea until two months later I looked on the dull, gray Caspian. Constantinople, with its white mosques and palaces, its golden minarets and domes backed by a gorgeous sky and sea, is certainly one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and the cosmopolitan stream of life which flows through it adds to its picturesque magnificence.

We were half an hour crossing, and landed at Haidar Pasha, just below Scutari, where the railway terminus is. I was afraid that my tezkereh would be examined or my books and gun annexed by the Douane, but no one seemed to be aggressive, and we slipped unmolested into the little station of the "*Chemin de fer d'Anatolie*," where we found the train waiting. I got into a first-class carriage thinking it was quite time for an event, but nothing more serious happened than the guard addressing me as "*Eccellenza*," the only European word he knew. Apparently no one travels first-class in Turkey except Government officials, hence the respect. The train started in a casual fashion at 7.30, and we were soon among the small villages outside Scutari. The villas of the Ottoman magnates looked pretty through the trees. Crowds of handsome peasants in gay dresses were on the platform at every station. I had plenty of time to observe them, as the train never halted for less than twenty minutes, although it seldom

bore off more than one passenger. At Ismid, I again steelled myself to face the Customs, and they really were there this time, but for some unknown reason they passed by my carriage. We proceeded in this leisurely way until the evening, when we reached Eski Sheyr, where the train lies up for the night. Here at last came the dreaded examination of my tezkereh. Directly we got out of the train, we were hustled into a little room, very close and dingy, with a rail across the middle. Behind the rail was a bed and on it lounged a Turkish corporal in the full glory of an authority against which he knew there was no appeal. He wore uniform surmounted by a night-cap. As I came in, this Rhadamanthus fixed his eye on me, and the whole time he was scrutinising the other tezkereh, he was watching me as well. At last the room began to empty. Every one else having passed the ordeal, the corporal put me through my facings. This was made a difficult matter by my ignorance of Turkish, and it ended in the conversation being carried on in Russian, of which we both had a fragmentary knowledge. The corporal began by asking why I was going to Angora.

"To see it," I said.

But he seemed to think this a very insufficient reason, and taking up my tezkereh, he read it through.

"No Englishman is allowed to go to Angora," he said curtly.

There was a dead silence after this, and I began to

feel as if I were condemned to stay at Eski Sheyr for ever. The corporal read the tezkereh through again, meditated, and put it away, saying he would let me know in the morning, whether I might continue my journey. As it was now nine o'clock I suggested that he might tell me where I could get a dinner and a bed. He produced a Greek friend who kept a "locanda," and I was allowed to leave the station in his company, Murad following behind with a bundle of his personal effects. My boxes remained at the station in custody.

The locanda was the dirtiest inn I have ever seen. It consisted of a kitchen which also served as a dining and smoking room, a staircase and two beds in a top passage. We found a Levantine there, a very pleasant fellow, who talked Italian fluently. I asked his advice about my tezkereh, and he said that if I paid the Greek well, and gave the corporal a medjidieh, everything would go smoothly, as the two were in league. This seemed good advice, although, for all I knew, my Italian friend might have been the third party in the alliance. I explained the idea to Murad as well as I could, and he went out to approach the corporal. In half an hour he was back again.

"Shu onbashi guzel adam," (That corporal is a fine man) he said as he came in, which I took to mean that the bribe had been accepted.

The dinner was oily, but I was too hungry to criticise it, and the Levantine made it pass off well



by his wonderful stories of opium-sellers. I went to bed in the passage soon after eleven, but the insects made sleep impossible, and I was not sorry when Murad appeared at five and said it was time to start. We gave the innkeeper a medjidieh, about four times too much, and directly we reached the station, the corporal came out of the office, and returned me my tezkereh with a low bow saying he had made a mistake about it. At seven the train started across the great plain of Angora which stretches from Eski Sheyr to Yozgat. This plain has been the battle-ground in turn of the opposing forces of Roman and Persian, of Greek and Turk, and some day may be the Turk will have to face the Russian there.

At a wayside station a man in a frock coat and fez, accompanied by an imposing train of attendants, got into a carriage higher up than mine. He was the Vali of the province, and we were lucky not to have been obliged to wait two or three hours for him, for when a Pasha wants the train he orders it, and as there is only one train the other passengers have to wait the Pasha's pleasure. At four o'clock we arrived at Angora, which is built on the side of a hill, and looks very white and pretty from a distance. The whiteness, I heard afterwards, was due to the forethought of the Vali, who had ordered the inhabitants to whitewash all the parts of their houses visible from the railway in order to impress the traveller. It was certainly a good idea, for it gives a spotlessly clean appearance to a town which

is as dirty as it is interesting. Alexander the Great came here in 330 B.C., just after cutting the Gordian Knot, and the Romans used the place as a military depôt on their great road to the East. But at the present time the fame of Angora centres round its shawls, its camlets and its cats.

At the station some fifty soldiers were drawn up in line commanded by quite thirty officers; this constituted the Vali's guard of honour. The men were fine and tall, and looked healthy, but their arms were wretched and their drill execrable. As a rule the Turkish soldiers are good fighters, and ride well, but the officers are frequently indifferent.

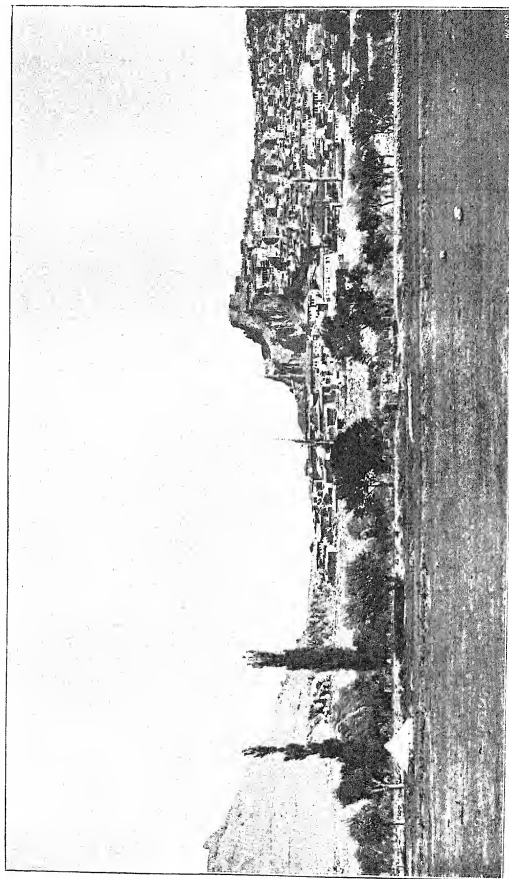
At the station Murad got a fly and we drove to a locanda. It was kept by a Greek who talked Italian, and there were several Greek and Armenian traders staying there. Mr. Cumberbatch, the British Consul, now promoted to be Consul-General at Smyrna, was very kind to me from the first, and it was entirely due to him that I got my *tezkereh visé*, and was able to proceed to Sivas. In fact British and American consuls in Turkey and Persia are exceptionally hospitable and friendly. They are regarded with great respect in the country because by writing to their embassies they can often get offensive governors displaced or transferred.

The first thing to do was to see the authorities, and next day the Consul's dragoman accompanied me to the Vali, Memdouch Pasha, a man of great ability, who had once been, and is now again, a member of the Cabinet at Constantinople.

We walked up to the door of the serai, where two sentinels were lolling in a lazy attitude, and after passing through a large hall built of wood, we were shown into the Vali's audience chamber. On going in, I lifted my hand to my hat without taking it off, which I had been told was the proper salute. The Vali rose from his state chair and shook hands, and directed us to sit down. Then there was a silence until coffee and cigarettes had been handed round. Meanwhile I had time to observe the Vali. He was a big man with a black beard, and was dressed in a frock coat and fez. He carried on a long conversation with the dragoman in Turkish, the upshot of which was that he would give me a "buyuruldu" or special order to go to Sivas, and would provide an escort if the British Consul would send a written guarantee that I was a *bona fide* traveller. We thanked the Vali for the concession, and took our leave, and soon after rode out to Gezireh to report progress to Mr. Cumberbatch. He wrote the required guarantee, and a Chawush, or sergeant of Zaptiehs, was told off to accompany me to Sivas.

Sivas is in another province, not under Memdouch Pasha's rule, and as the Vali there was on bad terms with him, it was more than likely that he would send me back in spite of the buyuruldu. The Chawush was sent with me, possibly to make sure that I was neither an agitator nor a newspaper correspondent, but I paid him well and he proved of great use to me.





ANGORA.

I decided to start for Sivas at once, and set about getting some kind of transport. There has been a scheme for the last ten years for continuing the railway which now stops at Angora to Erzerum and to Baghdad, by way of Sivas, but it is as far from realisation as ever, owing to the want of enterprise which prevails in Turkey. The road to Sivas is as bad as it can be—in some places a mere track over the rocks. We hired a common country cart called an "araba," furnished with a hood, to carry the baggage. The price as far as Sivas (290 miles) was £4 15s. Murad said he could easily sit in the cart, and the next thing to get was a horse for myself. I bought a little black four-year-old, which carried me well for 700 miles and more, to Khoi in Persia. He cost me £9, and I sold him for £5 at Khoi, so he was a good bargain. We bought a dozen bottles of red wine, as the cholera in the country made water drinking dangerous, and also some bread, rice, potatoes, and cooking oil. We trusted to finding chickens and eggs on the road, as it was too hot to make any attempt to store meat. Finally I bought a fez, as at that time it was a protection against attack in the towns. All Government officials and employés, whatever their creed, wear a fez, and a Christian meets with more respect in one than he would in a "shapka" or hat. It is a very hot head-dress, but mine served its purpose as far as Bayazid, where I discarded it for a helmet.

The dragoman took me all over Angora. It is more like a Levantine than a Turkish city, for it

is full of Greek, Italian, and Armenian traders. The bazars are well stocked, but typical Ottoman wares are few. The dragoman lived in a quaint old house, strongly fortified. In one room there was a large silver eikon, and the house was provisioned as if for a siege. I spent the night before starting for Sivas with the Consul at Gezireh, and slept in a bed for the last time for a month or more. The next day, July 25, I left the Consulate, attended by a Cavass (an armed Mussulman attendant), and went into Angora to call for Murad at the locanda. Mr. Cumberbatch promised before I went away that he would telegraph my coming to the American Consul at Sivas, and that was but one of the many kindnesses he showed me. I paid my bill at the locanda—a bill by the way is not settled on paper in Turkey, but by word of mouth—and then moved off, the Zaptieh and Cavass in front, next the hotel-keeper, who insisted on escorting me to the gate, and the araba last with Murad and Hassan, its owner, on the front seat, and the baggage inside.

## CHAPTER III

### ANGORA TO SIVAS

WE started for Sivas along a good road winding over the hills. The heat was intense, and I do not know how I should have borne it if it had not been for a bashluk, or starched linen baby's bonnet, such as the Turkish soldiers wear in the hot season, which protected my head from the sun very effectively. My wardrobe consisted of a Norfolk jacket, three pairs of riding breeches, and three flannel shirts, which we got washed in the towns we passed through, Murad mending them when necessary. I had no arms except a revolver in a holster, a 12-bore, and a whip. These, with a pair of field-glasses and a compass, made up my equipment.

About half-past ten on July 25, we reached a big lake called the Emir Gul, where we halted and lunched under some trees. The keeper of the trees was a Persian, and was very grateful for a bechlik, (ninepence in English money), and a cigarette in exchange for some bread and cucumber. The heat when we resumed our journey was intolerable, the sun now beating on our backs with such power as



to burn the skin. Even in latitudes further south I have never experienced such intense heat, and I believe it was exceptional even for Asia Minor. Murad and the Chawush, although they ought to have been used to it, mopped their black heads constantly, murmuring "Sijak, chok sijak" (It is hot, very hot). As we travelled without any halts every day, it was a marvel that none of us fell ill.

That first evening we put up at a khan in a village called Tul. Murad bought a chicken for three piastres, and boiled it with some rice, and this with bread and the rough country wine we had brought with us, made up my dinner every night for a month except when I was in the towns. Meat is difficult to get, fruit is dangerous; vegetables, except cucumber and rice, are unknown; but chickens are plentiful, and never cost more than sixpence, sometimes only threepence each. Wine and eggs are both ridiculously cheap, bread is about threepence a pound, and oil, which takes the place of butter in cooking, is twopence a pint.

While Murad was getting the dinner ready, two Armenians came up, and began grumbling to me at having been taxed twice that year, and being threatened with yet another taxation. I asked if any one had resisted or had been killed, but they had nothing worse to tell than that two of their friends had been imprisoned. They fidgeted about for a long time asking if I was a Christian, finally begged for money, and I was glad to get rid of them with a couple of bechliks. Nearly all the

inhabitants of this village were Armenians, and although they were extremely dirty, they did not seem to be in want or distress of any kind.

My bed was unrolled soon after dinner on a tumbledown balcony, where I slept in my clothes. The mosquitoes and other insects gave me no peace all night, and I blessed the india-rubber bath the next morning. It was a faithful friend throughout, though it suffered severely at Khoi, where the post-master put a knife through it to see what it was made of. This we repaired at Teheran, but the bath never recovered from its wound, and at Kashgar it had to be thrown away.

We left Tul the next morning, and started across the hot plain which lies between Angora and Sivas. From one to five in the afternoon the heat was indescribable, and even in the early morning and late evening, it was greater than it ever is in Europe. I talked to the Zaptieh as we rode, making valiant attempts to keep up a conversation in Turkish. He was a Circassian, "Chawush Mahomet Shaiker Chirkess" being his full designation, and he had fought in the war of 1877. His appearance was unprepossessing, a small ruffianly looking man about five feet six high, and very dark and unshaven. He wore a blue tunic with yellow frogs and red facings, his loose trousers were tucked into long boots, and his fez was jammed down on to his head. For the most part, however, he carried his boots in his holster, and wore slippers instead. He was armed with a Snider, a long curved sabre, and two horse

pistols. He was born in Circassia, he told me, but had immigrated to Turkey some twenty years before. The Circassians are a very proud people, and deeply attached to their religion. They dislike serving in the Russian army on equal terms with Christians, and so they frequently cross the frontier into Turkish territory, and join cavalry regiments there, and of all the Sultan's soldiers they are perhaps the most capable. The Zaptiehs to which my escorts generally belonged are a kind of irregular constabulary dispersed over the provinces. They provide their own horses, but are armed and equipped by the State, and often get their food from the peasants for nothing. Mahomet Chirkess was a favourable specimen of his kind, and his knowledge of local affairs helped me a great deal. He asked many questions about "Firengistan," and showed a half-contemptuous incredulity at my answers. His replies to my questions about the Turks, however, amazed me quite as much. Meanwhile I got on better than I had expected with Turkish. By the end of a month with the help of Redhouse's pocket dictionary, I had learnt enough words to conduct a simple conversation, and Mahomet endeavoured to teach me how to pronounce correctly, although he was useless on any point of grammar.

The second day we crossed the Kizil Irmak, or Red River, the ancient "Halys" and the largest river in Asia Minor, and then entered another barren valley, dry and destitute of all vegetation. At mid-day we met some Armenians travelling in a waggon.

They were dressed in semi-European clothes, and told us they were travelling to Angora for trade purposes, and had joined themselves into a company as a protection against the brigands in the hills. No Armenian dare carry a weapon in Turkey, so their only method of defence against attack is to go about in large numbers. It is not a diplomatic one, for it irritates their enemies, and gives colour to the tales of conspiracy put forward by the Turks.

To describe each day we spent on the road would be tedious, as they were all much alike. We saw little during the first fortnight, the heat preventing us making any excursions from the regular track. Yozgat, a pretty town we reached on July 29, was fairly typical of the other towns we passed. It enjoyed the dignity of being the head of the "sanjak," or district, and the khan was built of stone instead of wood, but in all other respects it was like the others, the smell from the open cess-pool being as overpowering as usual. After we had unloaded at the khan, Murad found a Jew, who could speak Italian, and I went with him to call on the Mutes-sariff, or Governor. He was away in the country tax-gathering, so the Binbashi, or military commandant, received me. "Binbashi" literally means head of a thousand—an exaggerated synonym for a Turkish battalion. This Binbashi was an old man of seventy, tall and upright, and with glossy black hair. When we were shown into the room, which looked over green fields to the distant mountains, he was saying his prayers—standing up and kneeling

down on a small square of carpet, and touching the ground with his forehead. Our entrance did not disturb him in the least. He went on calmly to the end, and then examined my buyuruldu while coffee and cigarettes were produced. All the time there was a hubbub outside. The corn dues of the outlying villages were being sold by auction on the steps of the house, and we had some difficulty in making a way through the excited bidders when we came in. There were four of us in the Binbashi's room—the Binbashi, the chief priest, or Imam, in his robes, the Jew interpreter, and myself. The Binbashi, whose name was Yussuf Bey, finding that I was English, told me that he had been aide-de-camp to the Ferik Williams Pasha in the war of 1854, and asked if he were still alive. Then he began relating some of his experiences during the war, and suggested my going to see a parade of his regiment. I agreed gladly, and after more coffee we were marched off by a satellite to a square where a foot regiment was going through disjointed evolutions under a stout officer. The drill was in the German style, with the slow step, but it was indifferently executed. The men were big and healthy, their age averaging about thirty years. The rifles were for the most part Sniders, and wanted cleaning badly; their appearance was only equalled by the uniforms. The band played Oriental music on ancient European instruments, and there was little connection between the music and the marching. Eastern harmony sounds like the tuning up of an

orchestra to the ordinary European ear, with the drums and cymbals loudest; but the practised musician recognises many subtle gradations of tone in their monotonous airs, particularly in their singing.

After the parade we went to the Régie, and my letter of credit was *visé* in Turkish. Then more coffee and cigarettes, and my guide led me through a long and crowded bazar, where we were besieged by salesmen offering gimcrack European knicknacks at fancy prices. The bazar did furnish one good thing, however, and that was a mattress, which was far more comfortable underneath my bed than the boxes had been.

We left Yozgat on the following day,<sup>f</sup> and just outside passed a hot spring in an open marble bath, built fifteen feet down into the earth. Thinking there might be some carving worth looking at, I went down the slippery steps to the edge of the tank, and there came upon a young woman seated and apparently engaged in meditation. Instead of picking up her cloak and veil, which were lying close by, she covered her face with her hair, and began talking. Her subject, as far as I could make out, was the generosity of "Firengis" in general, and of the "Ingiliz" in particular. I asked her what she knew of them, and she answered, "Chok bildim" (I have known much), but she did not offer to explain in what way; and, on Mahomet Chirkess appearing above, she slipped into the bath like an eel, and our conversation ended abruptly. Mahomet had evi-

dently heard the end of it, for he said, suddenly :  
"Are not all Firengis English?"

I explained that there were also Russians, French, and Germans.

"Russians are Russians," he said; "they are not Firengis. I have heard of those other tribes, but we never see them here."

And it is a fact that hardly any one travels in this country, except English-speaking people and Levantines.

We lunched at a water-mill, and afterwards halted at a small village called Tiftik, where there was a Mussafir Oda, or Guest-room, maintained at the expense of the head of the village. It was a long chamber, with a raised daïs at one end, separated from the body of the room by a wooden paling. On this daïs were carpets and cushions. A Turk when travelling sleeps on the daïs, and his attendants occupy the other part; but Murad and the Zaptieh preferred to sleep in the verandah, and Hassan would not leave the cart, so I occupied the room alone. After Tiftik, we came to a hamlet called Karamaghara, where there was an ancient wooden mosque. The priest came out and invited us to go in and look at it, but as I had on riding boots which were a nuisance to pull off, I refused. When he was told the reason, he asked what we Firengis did when we went into a "kilissa" (Christian church). I said we took off our hats, but not our boots, whereupon he broke in—

"There is but one God. If my lord will do the same as he does in his own mosque, it suffices."

This generous breadth of view encouraged me to take off my fez and go in. There was some fine old carving, sentences from the Koran blazoned in gold on the walls, and a curiously shaped roof, but that was all, and I think the priest was wrong in saying the mosque had been built 800 years after the Hegira, *i.e.*, about 1422 A.D.

The next interesting thing we came across was a Kurdish encampment. It consisted of about eight tents made of rough skins and carpets, pitched anyhow, and fenced in with hurdles to keep the cattle off. In the valley were the flocks of sheep and goats which constituted the wealth of the family. The chief, an old man with a white beard, came out of his tent when he saw us, and entreated us to lunch with him. I was taken into his tent, and made to sit down at the top end. Then he sat down a few yards off, and about twenty of the family squatted in a semi-circle about us. Behind hung a curtain of carpets, screening off the women's apartment. We could hear them talking, and see their eyes through the gaps, but they did not appear. The Kurds are handsome, and these men appeared very intelligent, taking great interest in my lunch, especially when Murad produced my knife and fork, a plate and a bottle of wine. Their disapproval of the last, by the way, was undisguised. "Sharab ichyor" (He drinks wine), they growled. The Kurds are far stricter in their observance of the Koran than the Turks, and I wished that Murad had left me wineless. However, nothing worse



happened than the chief and his elder sons stroking their beards, and ejaculating "Mashallah!" whenever I put my fork into my mouth.

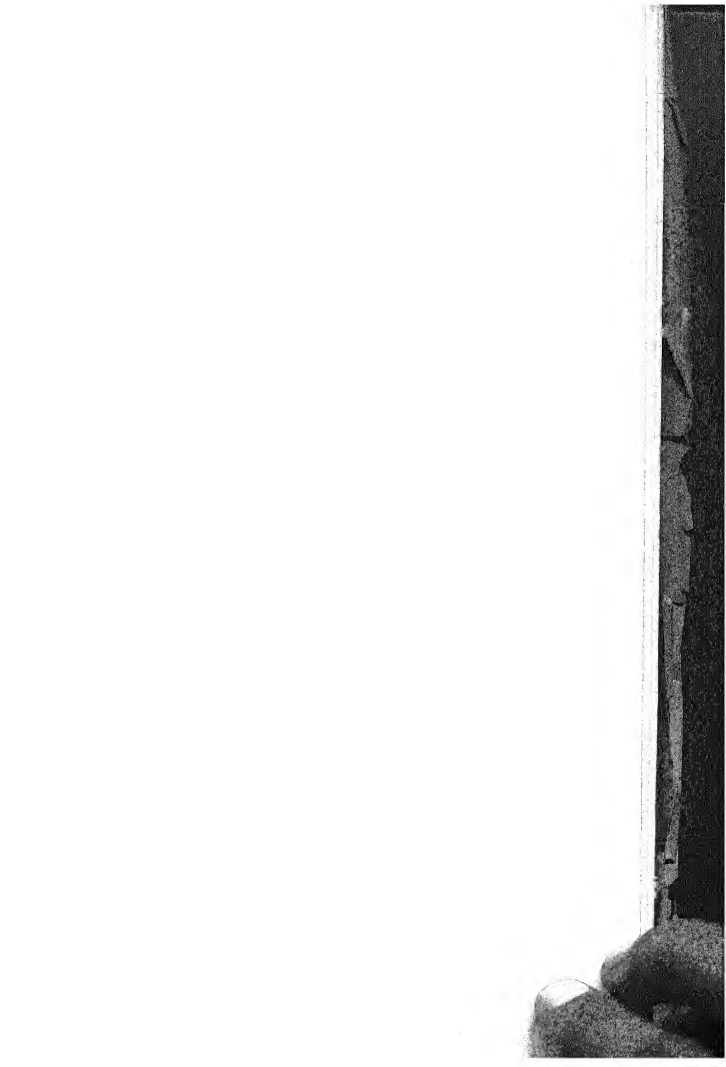
"My father, why does the Firengi eat with a hook?" a little Kurd asked at last, but all the answer he got was a smack from his father, at which he cried bitterly. To console him, I gave him a spoonful of marmalade, which terrified him; but, fearful of being punished again for bad manners, he seized the spoon and gulped it down like a pill, saying, "Avolla Effendim." He must have liked it all the same, for soon afterwards the father came and asked me what the "tatli" was. I gave him the pot, which he emptied. Murad then cleaned the knife and fork, and shut them with a click into a patent clasp-knife. This put too great a strain on the chief's curiosity, and he asked to see it close. After a careful examination, he remarked oracularly—

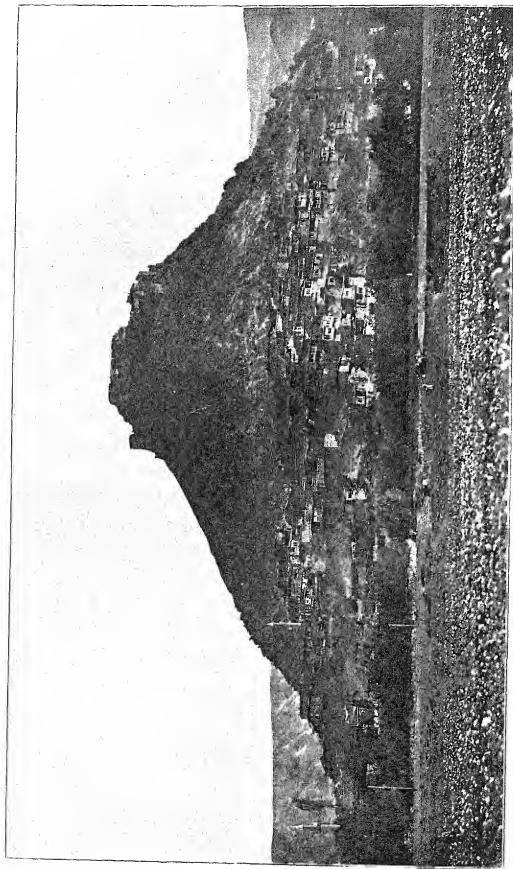
"In truth only in Firengistan can they make such things of beauty."

The horse had been put in the cart by this time, and after many farewells we started off again.

The Kurds are in general far more attractive to the casual observer than the Armenians. In spite of their brigand lives they are more honest and straightforward, and they bear pain with remarkable fortitude. They probably suffer as much, if not more, at the hands of the Government, but their complaints do not reach so far.

That evening we found the Mutessarif Pasha





CRUSADERS' CASTLE AT GILIST.

*(To face page 31.)*

collecting taxes at a small village named Gilisi, where there was an old castle on the hill-top, dating from the time of the Crusaders. These ruined fortresses are scattered all over the country, and were used by Godfrey de Bouillon and his successors in the Latin Empire as outposts against the Saracens. They very much resemble the castles one sees on the Bosphorus or in Balaclava Harbour, which were built by the Genoese. The Mutessarif was sitting in a long room surrounded by clerks, all busily engaged in the work of assessment. Every one was cross-legged, and they held their papers on their knees. The Pasha welcomed me with a remark that it was very hot working in July, which was evident from his appearance. After coffee he sent the Kaimakam up the hill to show me the ruin. The Kaimakam had on a thick coat, and the unaccustomed exercise made him perspire freely. He told me that he had learned French at school in Constantinople, but had forgotten it all, as out here he never had a chance of speaking it. This is usually the case with officials educated at Stambul. Few foreigners passed that way according to the Kaimakam, and he bemoaned his lot with great pathos. The Imam who had accompanied us up the hill, pointed out an old Arabic inscription cut on one of the stones, commemorating the rebuilding of the castle by one Kei Hosro. I offered him some money afterwards "for the poor," but he said, "Mumkin degil" (It is impossible). It was on the score of my religion that he refused the mejidieh,

but Mahomet told me that if the Kaimakam had not been there, he might not have been so particular.

We were now in the villayet of Sivas, and next day passed Yenikhan, which is on the road to Samsun, a big port on the Black Sea. We climbed some rising ground and came in sight of Sivas lying among some trees in the distance. This was the 2nd of August, the ninth day of our journey, and we had travelled nearly 290 miles. Lesser Armenia begins here, and besides the Turkish population, there is a large colony of Circassian whipmakers. An American Consul, a Belgian Consul and his wife, and two missionaries bring up the total of Europeans in Sivas to five. I was glad to have reached the end of the first stage of my journey, and I fancy even the hardy Murad was not sorry. As for Mahomet Chirkess, he said as we rode into the town—

“Yoldan sora sheyr chok iyi. Yarim hammam olor!” (After the road the city is good. To-morrow I shall have a bath!) He certainly needed one.

## CHAPTER IV

### SIVAS

THE city of Sivas lies outside the beaten track, and possesses more of its ancient beauty than either Angora or Erzerum which are in easy communication with the coast, and therefore have been more affected by the advance of time. The country round is supposed to be rich in Hittite remains, but as yet very few discoveries have been made. The Hittites are a forgotten people; the sites of their cities, and their whole history are as yet very little known, and the few archæologists who have attempted to supplement their literary researches by excavations have been discouraged by the Turkish Government. Hamdi Bey, the Curator of the Stambul Museum, and the discoverer of the great Sidon sarcophagi, has opportunities for exploration at Sivas which are denied to Europeans, and it is to be hoped that he will organise some scheme for research which is bound to afford an excellent yield.

Sivas is inhabited by Turks, Armenians, and Circassians, all living in different quarters of the town, and Kurds migrating from one encampment

to another, pour in from time to time. Other birds of passage are the Levantines and Jews. Seen from the hill, the city is a little Paradise. Built on a cool, sparkling river with gardens on its banks, it forms a wonderful contrast to the burnt-up, barren country which surrounds it. We rode straight to the "afion" or opium khan where we took the best room we could get. The furniture consisted of a long wooden settle, a dingy rug, and an old brass pot. The khan was full of Turkish traders, who were sitting in the public room overlooking the street when we came in. They talked little, and smoked a great deal, drinking small cups of Turkish coffee at frequent intervals. This coffee is very good, but far too sweet. None of the traders I saw at Sivas ever seemed to be transacting business in any other fashion than that described.

Mahomet and I, accompanied by an Armenian servant from the khan, rode to the Consulate soon after our arrival. Through the street outside ran a picturesque stream used for washing, drinking, and draining indiscriminately. Branching off to the right were long dark bazars full of Turks and Circassians, sitting cross-legged under their booths waiting for the customers who never seemed to come. The Consulate was a little house with the American eagle painted on a board over the front gate. Here we were told that the "Consulus Bey" was in camp some six miles out of Sivas, so I started to see him with the Armenian, and Mahomet went back to have his bath. As we rode

along the evil-smelling street, Armenians came out and salaamed. Next we passed over a bridge, and saw the Turkish youth of the town bathing in a canal. Hardly any of them could swim, but they were enjoying themselves immensely. The Turk loves the water as much as the Armenian hates it, and that perhaps accounts for the fact that the latter is far less cleanly in his habits all round. Beyond the canal we struck over the fields, planted with cotton, maize and corn, and after riding about five miles, came upon half a troop of Zaptiehs in camp. The Armenian was terrified, and said they were evil men who would rob us, and be twenty miles away the next morning. They shouted to us to stop, and three of them followed until we came in sight of the Consul's camp, when they turned back.

The Consul's five tents were pitched in a green valley under some big trees overhanging a stream, about a mile from the Vali's encampment. The Consul, Dr. Jewett, had a dragoman named Montesanto, a pleasant young Greek, and both of them pressed me to stay with them while I was at Sivas. They had fresh news about the state of the country. The Armenian troubles were being still further complicated by the attitude of the Kurds. The latter were angry with the Government for punishing some Armenian families under their protection, and had resolved to avenge the insult on the Vali of Bitlis who had been recalled to Constantinople and was travelling thither *via* Sivas. Sixty Kurds had lain in wait for him at three different points on the



road, intending to kill him, but the Vali had been warned and defeated their purpose by keeping his large escort of Turkish cavalry the whole way from Bitlis to Samsun. The feeling against the Porte was very strong, especially among the hill tribes, and that very day the Consul had received a letter from one of the chiefs promising support from the Kurds if the English should land in Asia Minor. The Vali of Sivas, Halil Bey, was unable to obey his orders from Constantinople for fear of the Kurds, and the Consul who had great influence in the city, had managed to secure the liberation of nearly all the Armenian prisoners. Matters were in an extremely unsettled state, and every one was waiting anxiously for the next move in the game.

The next day we all rode into Sivas, and Montesanto took me to see the Vali, who had the reputation of being the most corrupt official in Asia Minor. We knew he had barred the way to two or three English travellers before, and that he was a bitter enemy of Memdouch Pasha, who had allowed me to start from Angora. We were astonished therefore to find him courteous, pleasant, and ready to help me in every way. He said in excellent French that he had ordered an escort of four Zaptiehs, and would give me a new buyurldu. The room in the Vali's palace where the interview took place had several fine carpets on the floor, and looked more imposing than any official room I had yet seen. The Vali's dragoman and other personal attendants stood near the doorway, with their hands

crossed in front and their heads bowed, the ordinary attitude of respect in Turkey. Montesanto and I lifted our hands with a scoop to our fezes as we came in, thereby signifying that we put dust on our heads; and then Halil Bey came three steps forward and shook hands. He opened the conversation by asking what I thought of Sivas. I said that it compared favourably with Angora, and that it ought to have a railway. The Vali said he hoped there would soon be one, as Sivas would be the junction of the lines to Samsun, Erzerum, and Baghddad, and this would increase the prosperity of the town. He did not say a word about the Armenians, but warned me against Kurdish brigands on the road to Ersinjan and Erzerum.

"Les Kurdes sont assez difficiles pour notre gouvernement," he added.

From the Palace we went to the Régie where there was a new Italian director. He had just been moved from Diarbekr where cholera was raging, and did not regret the change. I drew £10 in liras and mejidiehs, which was quite enough to carry me as far as Erzerum. The money I spent on the road was little enough, as when Hassan had been paid for the araba, six or seven shillings a day sufficed for food, forage, and lodging. Hassan, by the way, had intended to turn back at Sivas, but as he found no freight there for Angora, and was great friends with Murad, he was now willing to come on to Erzerum. Mahomet Chirkess was discontented at receiving nine mejidiehs (about £1 16s.), but the

Consul told me it was far more than he had any right to expect, so I let him go away dissatisfied.

After leaving the Régie, I went into the bazar with Murad and Montesanto, and we bought some red wine and native jam, both of which were cheap and good. While we were lunching at the khan, an Armenian came to call on me. He sat down on the settle, and asked me in French when I was starting for Erzerum. Before I had time to answer, Murad rushed in, and shouted—

“Bir yuzbashi gelor” (A captain is coming).

Instantly my Armenian got up and vanished with a “*Je retourne à l’instant*,” but I never saw him again. The yuzbashi was a ruse of Murad’s who explained it by saying that if I entertained Armenians, I might not get my *tezkerah* back. I think he was right, and I found from other experiences that statements from individual Armenians were rarely reliable, and generally prefaced requests for money.

The only pretty things to be bought in Sivas are the famous “*kamchis*,” or silver riding-whips which the Circassians make very beautifully. But it was impossible for me to get one in time as they are only made to order. After seeing the bazars thoroughly, we went back to the Consul’s camp, where we stayed another day before starting for Ersinjan.

There was a choice of three roads. The first was by Karahissar, where there are silver mines, the second by Enderes, said to be the prettiest way, and the third a rough track over the mountains. I

was given the fullest details about the villages on the road by two old Turks at the post-office. As they differed on the important question as to whether we could get the araba over the mountains, and were agreed that Karahissar was not worth a visit, it ended in my choosing the Enderes road. They made long and wearisome speeches, as we sat in the little close room at the post-office, and at the end of each oration, the Turk who had spoken last, said to a small boy at the door—

“Ver cafe effendima” (Give the gentlemen some coffee).

These two old rascals, we heard later on, had sworn with many others to massacre every European in the villayet rather than have a Christian Governor, their anger having been roused by a report that the “Ingilterranin Padishah” (Queen of England) intended to send out a Pasha herself. All the same they were civil enough to me, apparently forgetting that they were under oath to murder Firengis in general. It is impossible to exaggerate the ignorance and backwardness of the people in this part of the Ottoman Empire. They have managed to stand still for centuries, and there are no roads, no schools, no hospitals, no attempts to do anything for the poor. A lofty contempt for Europeans and their civilisation prevails even among most of the educated Turks, and barely one man in a thousand has a dim idea that perhaps an enlightened and representative government might contribute to his material happiness. The

one admirable characteristic of the Turks, their devotion to their country, to their traditions and religion, is in itself an obstacle to reform, and it is certain that any changes emanating from the West or the North for the good of the Turkish empire, will be received coldly, even if not with active resistance.

## CHAPTER V

### SIVAS TO ERSINJAN

WE left Sivas early, preceded by two very smart Zaptiehs. I rode "Maimum" (monkey), Murad having so christened my pony—and Hassan and Murad followed in the cart. At Kochissar the Kaimakam asked me to lunch, but as it was thirty-six miles to Zarra the first halting-place, and I had had experience of the interminable length of Turkish meals, I only accepted coffee. We drank it on a balcony looking over the village and out to the mountains beyond. The Kaimakam was very curious about railways. Was it true that one could travel a six hours' journey in a single hour? When I said a two days' journey could be accomplished in one hour, he piously ejaculated, "God is great!" but I fancy he did not believe it, for he asked me next how the train walked so fast. I started on a laborious explanation of the machinery, but my Turkish and my dictionary both failed me when I got to the piston arrangements, and the Kaimakam smiled at what he thought was my bad lying. He insisted on my taking two more soldiers, and then

sent a third after me. This brought the escort up to five, and I explained to them as well as I could that I only wanted two of them, and that if five came, the wage would be reduced. But they only smiled and refused to leave me. Zarra is a fortified town with a fosse and battlements built of sand and stone. The khan was dilapidated, but fairly clean, and I passed a comfortable night on the balcony. The lieutenant of police called soon after my arrival, and stayed two hours. He asked me my name, my father's name, my profession, my age, where I had come from, where I lived, and a host of other questions, the answers to which he wrote down painfully in a little notebook. The English names puzzled him, but he would not go until he had got them right. At about 5 A.M. the next morning, the Kaimakam sent to know when I would call on him. Murad replied that although there was nothing I should like better than to see the Kaimakam, I could not call yet, because in Firengistan no one calls on a great man before mid-day. This skilful message saved me an interview as we left Zarra at seven, but it did not save me from having two more Zaptiehs thrust on me, which raised the army to seven. Their presence was rather a nuisance, and I managed to get rid of one because he had come without a rifle, and to send back the two Sivas men with a letter of thanks to the Vali. But even then there were four, or twice as many as were necessary.

During this day's journey we got well into the mountains, riding through a succession of beauti-

ful green valleys overhung by massive rocks, and watered by pretty brawling streams. Every now and then we came to a narrow defile which looked the very place for brigands, but we never saw any. We made slow progress as we constantly came to rivers, the bridges over which were always broken, and Hassan had an evil time getting the araba over. We slept at a Greek village called Daima Tash, and the next day, after two hours' riding, reached Enderes, a well-wooded and picturesque little place, with some fascinating old houses. The Kaimakam, Charvit Bey, sent a mulazam or lieutenant asking us to stay the night, but as it was only eight in the morning, I decided only to make an hour's halt. I was shown into a bare room where the Kaimakam and all the local notables were arranged on cushions. They all got up, and I said in my best Turkish—

"May the morning be propitious to Your Excellencies."

To which the Kaimakam answered pompously—

"Bonjour, Monsieur, j'espère bon voyage."

His French and my Turkish were about on a par, but he told me that when he was at school at Constantinople he could talk fluently.

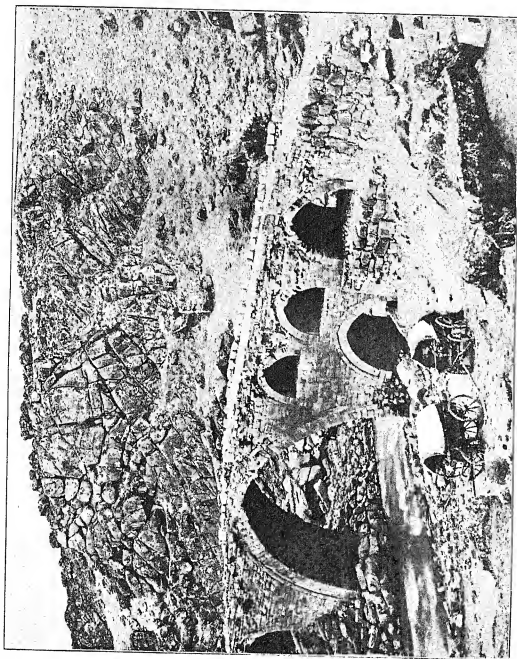
"Ah!" he said, "There you have civilisation, beautiful palaces, the comforts of Europe, an educated society, a general state of blessedness. Here one never hears news, nor sees a traveller, though it is truly a pretty place, and the Pasha the most generous of princes."

Coffee and iced sherbet, pears and grapes were



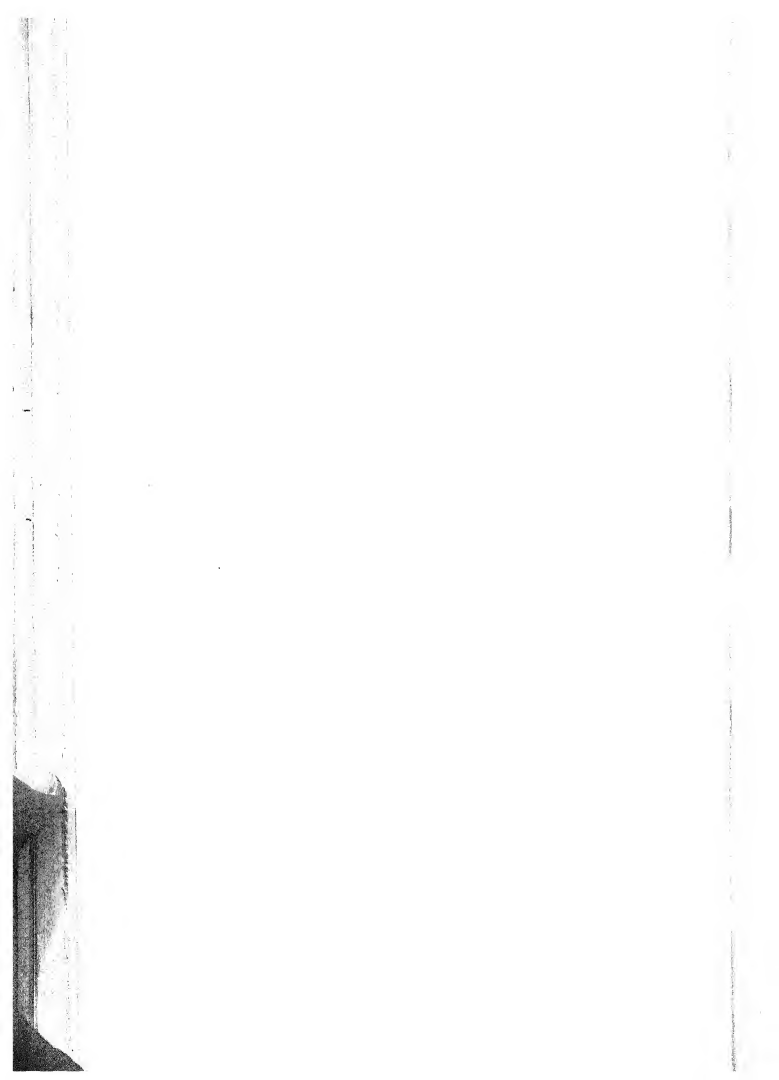
brought in by Circassian grooms, dressed in a livery which Charvit Bey said had been made in Constantinople, and of which he was evidently very proud. My field-glasses were handed round for inspection among the Imams. The first man looked through them the wrong way, cried "Mashallah!" and passed them on to his neighbour, who did the same. When the Kaimakam got hold of them he used them rightly and explained their properties to his friends, who did not seem to appreciate his superior knowledge. He was a tactful man, and did not press us to stay when Murad who had been buying things in the village came in to say the araba was ready. Persian and Turkish officials frequently construe it as an offence if their hospitality is refused, and are deaf to any excuse; yet sometimes they give invitations which they mean to be refused, and a great deal of knowledge of local custom is required to prevent sinning against their etiquette.

We reached Akvanis that night, and entered the villayet of Erzerum the following day. It is a long narrow province, and stretches along the southern frontier of Transcaucasia to Persia. At Gerdyanis the border village, my Zaptiehs left me with a great many salutations, and good wishes, but an absolute refusal to come any further. At last I persuaded one of them to come to the Kaimakam with me, and through his good offices I procured a mounted guide, armed with an antiquated Snider, and dressed in a torn uniform. He promised to come as far as Meliksherif, which was a great help, as neither



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BRIDGE ON ROAD BETWEEN SIVAS AND ESSINJAN.



Hassan nor Murad knew the way. At Meliksherif we saw snow on the peaks of the higher mountains for the first time. The village is situated in a wild cleft between two heights. The only room we could find was very small and dirty, and had no window, so I encamped on the roof. I did not get much sleep, however, for all the dogs ran about on the housetops, which communicated with one another, barking and fighting and making the night rather too lively. When the sun rose all the people on the roofs near mine were getting up, that is putting on the fezzes, turbans, and scarves they had taken off for the night. This constitutes their toilet.

We started again early, and for the first ten miles rode through winding gorges, the single Zaptieh whom I had induced to come on, continually shouting, "Perhaps there will be a thing," meaning that we might meet brigands. But we only met bullock-carts, the wheels of which squeaked and groaned distressingly, and a captain of cavalry, who told us that the Armenians in Ersinjan were giving great trouble, and that Mahomet Zekki Pasha, the Field-Marshal in command, was bringing in more troops from the surrounding districts. A little further on we met in a desolate jagged pass a party of ferocious-looking Kurds. Fortunately they were travelling with their women, children, and property, and were too heavily cumbered to attempt to plunder us. The women veiled their faces when we came near, and the men scowled and swaggered. All of them had rifles,

embossed and ornamented with silver studs, but looking more beautiful than serviceable. Their horses however were pure bred and extremely well turned out. We saluted each other gravely, but no doubt they were cursing their impedimenta, and longing to attack us. From here we proceeded through a more cultivated tract of country to Ersinjan. As we drew near the town we met many Turks coming out after their day's work to their villas which are built outside. They were all very polite, although they stared in amazement at "Firengi" clothes. At seven in the evening we arrived at the big khan in Ersinjan, having covered the 160 miles from Sivas in five days.

## CHAPTER VI

### ERSINJAN

ERSINJAN lies in a valley, and is intolerably hot by day and infested by all sorts of flies and mosquitoes at night. The neighbouring villages are very pretty, consisting almost entirely of gardens with pavilions built for the harems of the rich merchants. The gardens are laid out in the conventional Persian style, that is, in long straight walks edged by rows of dwarf trees thickly planted, and shallow streams intersecting the avenues. There is generally a fountain or tank in the centre of the garden, but no flower-beds. The lodge, or pavilion, can accommodate eight or ten guests besides the permanent harem, and the owners ride out from the city in the long summer afternoons, and entertain each other in their gardens.

In Ersinjan itself the long covered bazars well stocked with fruit, cotton, cloth, and silver are a noteworthy feature. But the place is mainly given over to soldiers. There are two infantry and one cavalry barracks, an arsenal, and the Commandant's offices, all well built on European models. Drilling

constantly goes on in the two large squares of the town, in one of which stands the picturesque old khan where we stayed. The organisation of the Army Corps, whose *chef lieu* is at Ersinjan, is excellent, owing to the energy of the Field-Marshal, Mahomet Zekki Pasha, who lives here, and who has worked hard to improve it. The "hammams," reputed very fine, disappointed me. They were low and dark, and quite bare of all ornament. In Persia the baths are far more attractive, as they are lavishly decorated with pictures. But the "Sunnis" (Turks and Arabs of the Mohammedan persuasion) are taught by the Koran that the representation of the human form is unlawful, which narrows the scope of their decorative art.

I was much struck in Ersinjan by the apathy of the populace. In the bazars the salesmen sat staring in front of them, repelling rather than attracting customers, and if we were pounced upon as we walked through, it was always by an Armenian. The mental dullness of the Turk is often called "stoicism" and "impassiveness" by his apologists, but it seemed to me to deserve a worse name. The climate and the Koran together have fostered the Turk's inertia to such an extent, that with the exception of the soldiers I did not see a single man in Ersinjan who looked alive.

The khan I stayed at was the smaller of the two in the town, but it was far more advanced, possessing not only a kitchen but a bagatelle table. Early in the morning I had two callers, Ibrahim Effendi,

an aide-de-camp of the Marshal's, and Abraham Effendi, a military doctor. Ibrahim was a Circassian, and talked Russian, and a very little French. Abraham was a Jew, and talked excellent French, Italian, and Greek. He told me that he came from Salonica, and was a convert to Islam. These two were most kind to me during my stay in Ersinjan, and took me everywhere. We had breakfast together, and went out to call on Hassan Bey, the "Mir Alai," or Commandant of the town. He received us with enthusiasm, talking Turkish volubly, and showed us over the new barracks, stables, and arsenal. The clean and smart appearance of the soldiers compared favourably with what I saw elsewhere in the East, except in the Transcaspian and Siberian provinces of Russia. The men wore summer uniforms of white drill; their tunics were buttoned, their side-arms well cleaned, and they carried Martini-Henry rifles. There were two fair bands, and the horses of the cavalry were well cared for, and for Turkey, luxuriously stabled. In Erzerum and other towns of the province, things were not nearly as good as here, where the efforts of one capable man showed what efficient and soldierly troops the Turks can make under organised management.

Hassan Bey marched me about everywhere holding my hand all the time, and after much sight-seeing we went back to the office, where an orderly brought in coffee. They all praised the Field-Marshal, who was in the country at one of his



villas, and said that I must go and see him, as he would be annoyed with them for having let an Englishman go through without his knowledge. After some conversation of a technical nature, we started out again to call on the Mutessarif. The Mutessarif, or Civil Governor, is only a Bey, and occupies rather an anomalous position, for Mahomet Zekki is a first-class Pasha and a Mushir, and as such a very big man. Apparently all the civil administration radiates from Erzerum, which is the head of the villayet, while the military orders are issued from Ersinjan, the head-quarters of a command extending over Erzerum, Trebizond, part of Sivas, Kharput, and Bitlis. The army corps contains over 15,000 men. Consequently the Civil Governor's importance is rather dwarfed, and he has to exercise a great deal of tact to keep his position. He received us in his private room where he was entertaining the Imams. He promised at once to *visa* my tezkereh for Erzerum and give me an escort. Then he asked me if I knew Paris, and told me in French that he had been at the Ottoman Embassy there, and that he thought it was the most pleasant city he knew, with the exception of Stambul. He talked a great deal about both places, and I found him a very interesting companion. When we left he said, with a touch of acrimony, that he supposed he should not see me again, as he had heard I was invited to the Marshal's. I knew nothing of it myself, but that same evening an aide-de-camp

came to the khan with a message from Mahomet Zekki, asking me to lunch next day. We dined with the Binbashi, or Lieutenant-Colonel of the 7th Nishangi, a regiment of light cavalry. In the barrack square on our way there, we heard the band making an excruciating noise; every instrument seemed to be tuned to a different pitch, and there was no conductor. The doctor told us that they were learning some English tunes in my honour, and the first question the Binbashi asked when he received me was if I recognised the tunes?

I said "Chok guzel" (Very beautiful), but dared not commit myself any further. The band went on playing for a good hour, and then the doctor asked me in a whisper if I thought that now would be the time to play the English National Anthem. I got out of it by saying that it ought only to be played for royalty, and the music came to an end. The second part of the entertainment was supplied by the Binbashi and some of his officers letting off rockets and catharine-wheels in the barrack yard. Then they showed us some swords with blades superbly damascened up to the hilts, which were embossed with jewels, and after effusive compliments on both sides we left at about ten o'clock.

The next morning, at half-past seven, the araba was loaded and despatched with two Zaptiehs to Sarakaia, our halting place for the night, and I rode off with Ibrahim in a different direction to the Pasha's villa. When we reached the door into the garden

several servants ran out, and held our bridles and stirrups while we dismounted, and then Ibrahim led me into an orchard, where I found my host attended by two Imams and two aides-de-camp.

Mahomet Zekki Pasha, Mushir of the fourth army corps and one of the most remarkable men in Turkey, is a Circassian by birth, and was trained in the most rigid Mussulman school. His rapid rise to power—he is now only forty—was due almost entirely to the influence of his sister, who is one of the Sultan's favourites in the harem at Yildiz Kiosk, and either by wit or luck he has managed never to give offence to the great Palace party at Constantinople.

I saw before me a tall, broad-chested man, with finely cut features and dark colouring. He looked younger than his years, his face being smooth and quite without lines. His manner was polished and agreeable, yet underneath there lay the steel of a stubborn will. It is possible that he possesses that indifference to human suffering and death which is characteristic of the Circassian race, but whether any real responsibility for the events at Sassun can be brought home to him it is impossible for me to say. It is certain however that there is much good in his character. He has improved the soldiery under his command, and by suppressing brigandage and encouraging trade, he has reduced his provinces to unprecedented tranquillity. He is popular with the soldiers, and if he is a mistaken man, he is not a narrow one. Before all things the man is ambitious, and he is regarded throughout Turkey as a

possible regenerator of the Ottoman Empire. I only saw him in the light of a kindly and courteous host, but I was greatly struck by the discernment he showed in every subject we touched upon.

We sat in the garden for about five minutes, and then the Marshal got up and led me by the hand through an inner garden up on to the balcony of a pagoda, where we had coffee. The Imams and aides-de-camp followed, and in a few minutes, Ali Shefik Pasha, an old general, and Namuk Bey, the Mutessarif, whom I had met the day before, joined us. Lunch was served in an octagonal room overlooking the garden. We sat at a round table, and the Marshal put Namuk Bey on his right and me on his left. Opposite him was a large dish full of a sort of stew. After saying "Bismillah," the Marshal took a piece of meat out of the dish, ate it, and then took another bit in his fingers and put it into my mouth, which was disconcerting, although I knew that it was a compliment. He repeated this several times during the other courses, which consisted of vegetables, pilaf, stewed meats, pastry, tapioca, and fruit. All had knives and forks, but only we three used them. The drinks were water and iced cream.

There was very little conversation during lunch, and I was not sorry when a servant brought in an ewer and basin, a sign that the meal was over. The Marshal insisted on pouring water over our hands, and then we returned to the balcony, where we talked for some time in Turkish and French. On hearing that I had served in the Foot Guards for

about three years, he asked me several questions about military organisation in England, and invited me to stay with him a few days and inspect his troops. I was surprised to find that he deplored the Turkish law which prohibits any reunion of the officers. To this he attributed the lack of *esprit de corps* among them. He showed an open mind on another question, being in favour of the rayahs or Christian subjects of the Sultan, serving in the army with the Mussulmans. The reason he gave was that the Armenians would then be dispersed more equally, and would be better disciplined.

"Now they give me very much trouble," he concluded.

The old general wandered off into rather tedious stories of the organisation of the Turkish army in the war of 1854, when he had acquired a great admiration for European methods. Altogether, however, it was a most interesting afternoon, and when I took leave of them they both pressed me to stay. The Marshal asked me to write to him, and wanted me to take away a fine wolf-hound pup, but as I had nothing to give him in return, an essential when you accept a present in the East, I was obliged to decline it. At last Ibrahim Effendi, an aide-de-camp, and myself, escorted by two troopers and a Zaptieh, left the villa. We had to cross a very deep stream just before we came up with Hassan, and one of the soldiers was nearly drowned.

We slept that night at a lonely khan in the

mountains. The Zaptiehs did sentry-go up and down outside, and refused admittance to three Kurds on the ground that there was no room, which seemed rather harsh treatment of tired travellers, but Murad said grimly that if they had slept there we should have had all our things stolen. We halted at Mamakhatun in the course of our journey the next day, and saw an interesting old mosque and a "turbet," as a Sunni saint's tomb is called. I dined on a roof infested by cats, one of which ran off with a chicken. The weather was very hot, but the scenery grew more lovely every day, and on August 14 we reached Erzerum about three in the afternoon.

## CHAPTER VII

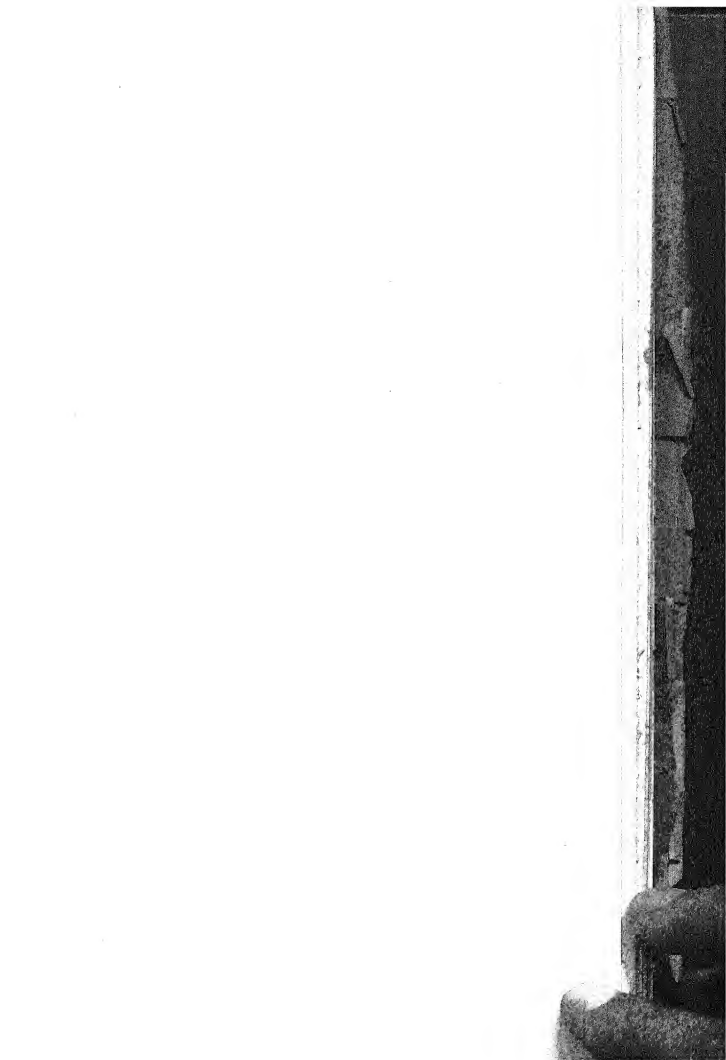
### ERZERUM

IN 1330 Sir John Mandeville wrote of Erzerum :

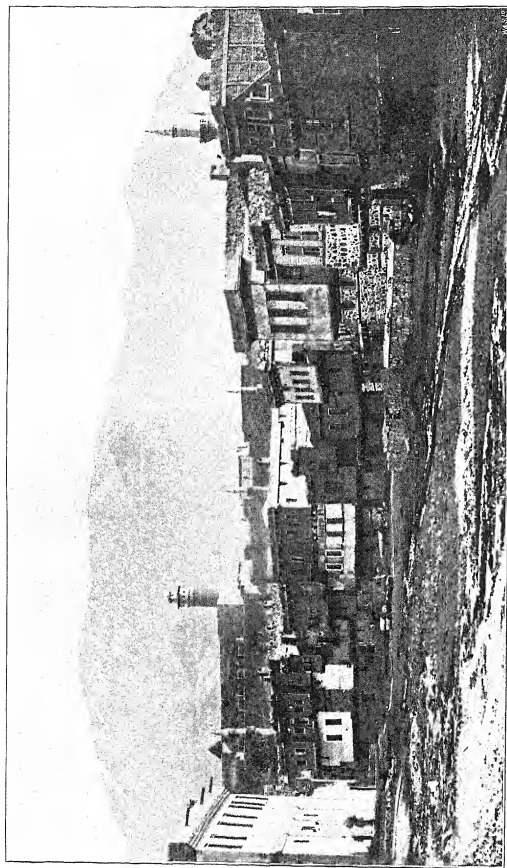
Artyroum was formerly a good and prosperous city, but the Turks have greatly wasted it. Thereabouts grows little or no wine or fruit.

Whether Sir John ever visited Erzerum is doubtful, but the description is fairly accurate, and the decay of the city has steadily continued since that time—120 years before the expulsion of the Christian Emperors from Constantinople—down to the present day. What prosperity the city still possesses is chiefly due to Armenian enterprise, and yet the Armenians have suffered more cruelty in Erzerum than anywhere else.

Lying at the junction of the Trebizond, Sivas, Kars, and Tabreez roads, Erzerum has at all times been a great mart on the caravan routes from Constantinople and the Black Sea to Persia, and from Asia Minor to the Caucasus. The Russians have always understood its importance, and they captured it in the war of 1877. The present fortifi-







STREET IN ERZERUM.

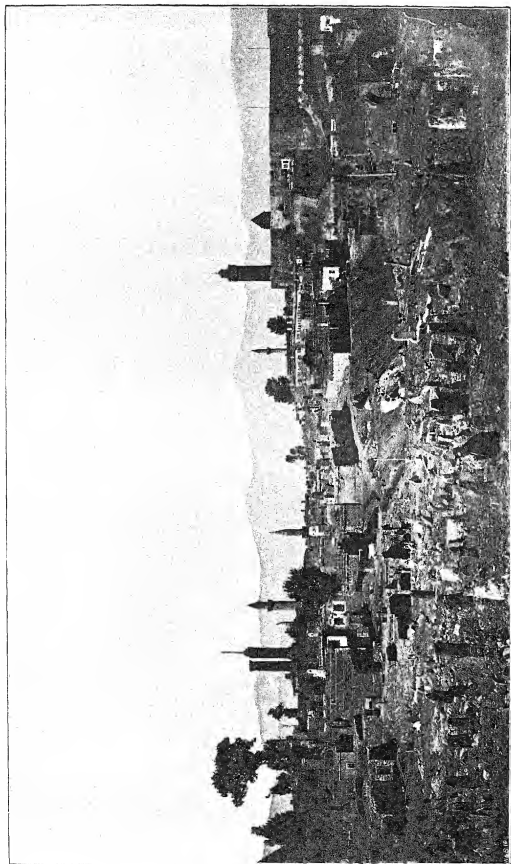
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cations consist of a parapet with high slopes, useless against modern siege guns, and a pestilential ditch which has been responsible for the death of two thousand soldiers in a single season. Yet the city, standing at an altitude of 6,000 feet, and just under the highest peaks of the Agri Dag range, is naturally healthy. Mandeville alludes to the "many good waters and wells that come from under the earth from the river of Paradise that is called Euphrates, which is a day's journey from the city." The Euphrates, here called Kara Su, runs south near Ildja, where there are hot springs still frequented by the inhabitants for their healing properties.

When we were at Erzerum it was the scene of the most important events in Asia Minor. There had been a massacre shortly before, and two others followed not long after. The feeling of excitement and insecurity had reached a crisis. It is perhaps unnecessary to recall in detail the events which are now a matter of general history, but for the benefit of those who have forgotten them it may be well to sum them up briefly. In September, 1894, the massacre of Sassun had taken place, and had been followed by others until the end of the year. The Sultan then appointed a Commission to sit at the various places in the Sassun and Mush districts to inquire into the disturbances. The sittings were held from January 24 to June 1, 1895, and were attended by delegates from the European embassies. The Commission itself consisted of three Turkish

judges, while the cavalry escort of 400 men which accompanied it was commanded by the notorious Tewfik Pasha. The Commission found that the Armenians had revolted, and that no unnecessarily harsh measures had been taken to suppress the insurrection. As I rode into Erzerum I met the Commission coming out. They were driving in carriages, and what with secretaries, clerks, servants, baggage, etc., there must have been sixty vehicles or more. Tewfik was in full dress, and rode a beautiful horse. All his soldiers were well mounted, and better turned out and equipped than the ordinary Turkish dragoon. But the judges looked careworn and miserable. The class of Turk to which they belonged does not appreciate revolting details, and it was reported that on their first visit to the Sassun pits they had been overwhelmed with disgust. Mr. Shipley, our delegate, and his French and Russian colleagues had gone on by post to Trebizond and Constantinople, but the Commission were travelling by slow stages, tired no doubt of the arduous task of discriminating between conflicting evidence. And here it should be said that all that was done to convince Europe of the atrocious inhumanity of the crimes committed in the villayets of Kurdistan was entirely due to the zeal of the European delegates. They worked hard and faithfully to get at the truth in the face of systematic opposition from the official dispensers of justice.

When we reached the khan at Erzerum we heard that several Armenians were still in prison, and,



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CEMETERY AND CITADEL AT ERZERUM.





despite the efforts of our Consul, Mr. Graves, there seemed little chance of their being liberated. The Vali, Ismail Hakki Pasha, was a rabid Mohammedan, and when I met him a day or two later, he was wearing Turkish dress, a very unusual thing for a Governor to do in these days in Asia Minor. I gathered from all I heard that the Russians were considered to hold the key to the position. A short time before, when there had been a riot near the Russian consulate, the Cossack escort had turned out armed only with whips, and had chased the Turkish infantry, who had rifles, out of the street. The local prestige of Russia was increased by this incident, and it was well known that thirty to forty thousand of her troops were massed on the Caucasian frontier.

The English, on the other hand, were far away, and "though great in ships, nothing by land," as the general opinion in Turkey runs. The Kurds, however, in spite of it, had just sent a monster petition to the Queen setting forth the ungenerous treatment they had received and offering their alliance. They laid emphasis on the fact that they had always lived on friendly terms with the Armenians, many of whom were their slaves, until latterly, when they had been forced by peremptory orders from the Palace to ill-treat and murder them. Now they were told that the Sultan was exculpating himself to the Cabinets of Europe by alleging that the massacre had been wantonly committed by the Kurds!

Therefore [ran the petition], not content with leaving us in ignorance and barbarity by withholding the blessings of education, they have compelled us to do evil deeds, and finally have robbed us of our honour.

What amount of truth there was in these statements I should be sorry to say, but there was a general feeling among Turks, Armenians and Europeans that a great deal depended upon the action of the Kurds, and that they might at any time do something unexpected. Nothing but that masterly inactivity with which the Porte has frequently carried the day, could have triumphed over a situation so difficult as that prevailing when in August, 1895, I arrived at Erzerum.

We put up at the khan, where I was soon visited by a Canadian missionary who had lived in the city seventeen years. We had a long and interesting talk, from which I gathered that he was carrying on a hopeless struggle for a cause he loved. In spite of the zeal, the labour, and the money given by wise and energetic men to the work of conversion to Christianity, hardly any real converts are ever made. In Persia it is the same. I remember even meeting a missionary in China, at Kashgar, on the other side of the Pamirs, who had been working there ten years, and had not a single convert to show for his pains. One cannot help thinking that some of the money devoted to missions in Persia and Turkey would do more good if it were turned to the more prosaic ends of making roads, or building bridges, schools, and hospitals. The Mussulman

knows that, according to the Koran, he will be eternally damned if he changes his faith. He knows, too, that it means death from the hand of his former co-religionists. So the missionaries work on almost hopeless ground, and often fill up the time by quarrelling among themselves. The American Methodists fight with the English Church, the English Church with the Roman Catholic, not for the Mohammedan so much as for the Armenian, professedly a Christian already. The personal character of the missionaries is beyond praise, but their efforts seem to be made in a wrong direction.

When the missionary, had gone, the Consul's dragoman came round—a pleasant old Armenian, who knew a little English. He told me that it was quite likely I should not be able to go on to Bayazid, as I might "see too much on the way." I was not allowed to visit the prison in Erzerum, probably for the same reason. The Consul asked me to go and stay with him in camp at Ilidja on the Friday after my arrival, so I left Murad in charge at the khan, and spent three pleasant days under canvas. His dragoman meanwhile worked the strings of Turkish officialdom to get Murad and myself permission "*pour quitter la Turquie*," for the passport system here is as severe in theory as that of Russia, although it is less rigorously carried out.

While at Ilidja I rode the winner of the Erzerum Derby, a horse with a history worth recounting. Early in the year, Mr. Graves had bought a



three-year-old, called Dervish, which he backed to run against any horse in the town. A colonel in a Turkish regiment accepted the bet, and the race was arranged to take place on a flat course of about seven furlongs outside the town. When the day came the Turk asked for another fortnight, as his horse was not ready. Mr. Graves let him have it; but, when it had gone by, the colonel again wanted to temporise. Mr. Graves then said that although he was willing to waive the bet, he thought that the race ought to be run without further delay. The day happened to be the Queen's Birthday. All the inhabitants of Erzerum flocked to the racecourse in great excitement, and the Vali had a carriage waiting to take him there if the event should prove propitious to the Turks. On the other side, the Armenian bishops and clergy stayed in the town and prayed on their housetops for the Consul's victory. Mr. Scudamore, the *Daily News* correspondent, was up on our horse and won easily, the bet was never settled.

Mr. Scudamore, by the way, had been in Erzerum some months. He had hidden in the bottom of a carriage all the way from Trebizond and once in Erzerum had defied the Vali to remove him. When his letters were intercepted by the Turks he established a private post as far as Tiflis, and succeeded in getting his telegrams despatched from there. Although quite young, he has been a war correspondent in the Soudan as well as in the Russo-Turkish war.

One day we were visited by the Armenian Bishop, Monsignor Kuchukian, an agreeable and well educated man, who did not seem to share the dislike of his fellow Armenians to the Turkish nation. He condemned the relentless coercion of the Palace and said that unless something were done to relieve them, the Armenians would soon emigrate in a body to Russia or any country that would receive them, unless Russia annexed Armenia, which event he thought would prove the eventual solution of the problem. The Armenian clergy were living at that time with their lives in their hands, and the dragoman told me that in spite of the protection of his office, he dared not leave the town gate by day nor his house by night, and yet there were as many Armenians as Turks in Erzerum. The predominance of the Turk is again explained by the fact that no Christian subject of the Porte may carry arms, and in addition the Armenians are by birth and education a trading and not a fighting race. In Persia their genius for commerce has full scope, and even in Asia Minor it generally survives oppression. But in Erzerum death, bankruptcy, and confiscation have made great ravages in the Armenian trading community.

Before leaving Erzerum I had an interview with the Vali. We found him in a little kiosk outside the town playing chess with a general. A military band was playing a deafening tune outside. He did not get up when I came in, so I

merely touched my fez, instead of scooping my hand up to it. The only thing to do when a Turk is rude, is to meet him on his own ground. As he did not speak a word, I began to talk to the dragoman. This nettled him—and he roused himself from his chess to tell a eunuch to bring some coffee. He then asked me where I had come from, although he must have known quite well, as the Sadr Azam had telegraphed my arrival.

“Stambul,” I said.

“And where are you going?”

“Persia.”

“What route have you chosen?”

“I do not mind what route I go by.”

“That also matters nothing to me,” said the Vali loftily. “What route you choose to go by, that one is open to you.”

The dragoman then put in that the road by Kars and Erivan was a good one.

“Yes, certainly, but full of Armenian beggars and Kurdish brigands,” the Vali answered sarcastically.

“Why should I not go by Mush and Van?” I asked.

Now the road to Mush was the road to Sassun, and in Sassun lay the evidences of the worst massacres, so I was not surprised to hear the Pasha, in spite of his indifference of a moment before, say hastily—

“By that road it is hardly safe for a European to

travel. The brigands are dangerous there, though otherwise the country is peaceable. Any other road is easy, but that one impossible!"

It was settled at last that I should travel by Bayazid, and he promised an escort.

The buyuruldu and the Zaptiehs arrived in due course, and on the 21st of August I said good-bye to my kind host, and started for Bayazid.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ERZERUM TO BAYAZID

As we rode out of Erzerum in the early morning, we passed a cavalry regiment manœuvring on the plain. The horsemanship of the troopers was singularly ungraceful, and they were riding with such short stirrups that their knees were almost on a level with the cantles of their saddles. A young officer came up and told me that he was teaching them to ride, that they were "ajem" (recruits). As he was on foot, we could not see what his own horsemanship was like, but one could not believe that it was good, when he trained his men to sit so short that they could not possibly use their swords with effect. However when I suggested this he answered lightly.

"Oh it makes them all the taller, and they reach further!"

I felt inclined to suggest that they might overreach, but just then the colonel came up on a very fine Arab, and took me about a quarter of a mile across the plain to watch another troop being exercised. Both drill and manœuvring here were inferior, and the riding poor, according to our ideas. But

the men were a big strong lot, and if well led would prove formidable to any Cossack or Circassian regiments in the Russian service. But the Turkish troops are seldom properly led, and when there is any fighting to be done, a good deal devolves upon the "chawashes" (sergeants). Still behind earth-works the Turk is almost invincible.

We climbed the heights that lie to the east of Erzerum, and then passed the outer ring of advanced works which now constitute the main defence of the town against any aggressions from the north. The fortifications are out of date, and the detached redoubts which spread all along the frontier to Ararat are sadly deficient in guns and ammunition. Six new guns sent to Trebizond in 1895 by the War Minister were delayed there three months before the road was repaired enough to admit of their being conveyed to the forts round Erzerum. And it is this lack of roads which has hampered the trade of the city. During six months of the year it is practically snowbound, and the only route kept in anything like order is the military road leading to Kars and the Caucasian frontier. This is due to the Russians, who repair it as much as they can. The other great caravan route from Trebizond by Erzerum to Khoi and Tabreez, which we followed, is barely passable for vehicles even in summer, and in winter even horsemen cannot get along it. The cost of transport is so enormous that miles of corn rot uncut, because the price of carrying it to a market is more than its market value.

At Hassan Kaleh the weather became sensibly colder. It was here that I met a gentleman who supplied me with lunch, and gave me his views on the political situation. Like Abraham, the little Jew doctor at Ersinjan, he said that doctors were the only class in Asia Minor with any education, and this was only because the Government recognised the necessity of their having some knowledge of European medicine in order to keep the troops alive. Speaking of the massacres he said that if left alone, Kurds, Turks, and Armenians were equally ready to lead a quiet and inoffensive life. But the slightest attempt at agitation from without was fatal, whether it came from the Porte, or from outsiders who fancied that by stirring up the feelings of Europe they could change the constitution of the Ottoman Empire. There was no doubt that for some time before the outbursts of 1894 and 1895 such pernicious agitation had continually taken place. The Armenians are a clever and avaricious people, and certain demagogues among them believe that reform in Armenia would suit the policy of England and Russia and perhaps put power into their own hands. They know that nothing is easier than to rouse the suspicions and wrath of their masters at Constantinople, and they deliberately set themselves to attract the attention of Europe by lighting a fire-brand. That the lighting of it means rape, murder, and every conceivable misery for their own people these agitators do not consider.

The Kurds, the doctor went on to tell me, are an

almost barbarous people, with fine instincts of chivalry and easily influenced by their religion. They look upon plunder as a lawful profession, and nothing will keep them from it except the fear of retaliation. So they were only too ready to obey the Sultan when he commanded them to pillage infidels, and it was only when they found themselves being made the scapegoats of the Government's crimes that they rebelled against the orders laid upon them.

As to the Turks, the doctor said it must be borne in mind that the peasants have no personal enmity to the Armenians. It is the soldiers, worked on by their officers, who exhibit that bitter and relentless fury against another religion which lies dormant in all Mohammedan races. At Yildiz Kiosk they know very well what a force they possess in this blood-thirsty fanaticism, and how easily it can be aroused. It is not surprising that they use such a force when a difficulty comes. Take a typical case according to their lights. They hear that there has been an Armenian agitation: they are anxious to prevent the Great Powers of Europe from annexing any more of the rapidly dwindling Ottoman Empire. An agitation is an excuse for such interference, so the one idea of the Palace officials is to have the rising put down before the news of it reaches Europe. The Valis are commanded to suppress the rising, and that means a massacre.

The doctor had come to the conclusion that there were only two things to be done to settle the question. Either the Turk must rule his provinces in



his own way, or the European must step in and rule them in his way. If the Turk rules, the old system will drag on : oppression here, petty tyranny there, speculation and immorality everywhere, and now and again a massacre. Perhaps there may be a slow improvement in roads, schools, and civilisation generally, but it will be a long time coming. If the European rules, he will rule after his kind, whether he be Russian or English, on some fixed plan for some definite result. Half measures, such as the appointment of Christian governors, or a mixed police force, can only bring about a worse state of things. The Turk will not submit to dictation from the Christian unless he is coerced, and he will never tolerate sharing a right with the despised Armenian. If the disastrous condition of Asia Minor is to be remedied, either England must act or she must let Russia act, and quickly.

This was the substance of my informant's conversation. He was a broad-minded man, and his views struck me as interesting and worth consideration.

At Keupru Keui the road divides, one branch leading to Russia and the other skirting the mountains ; beyond, at Delibaba, we came across a regiment in camp. The Binbashi said, " They have been ill, very ill, but now they are better," and we found out that cholera had been among the troops. He and his officers were most kind and hospitable. He combined the civil office of Kaimakam with his military duties, and several peasants were tried in my

presence. The indictment was always the same, failure to pay the imperial taxes, and the excuse the same, bankruptcy.

"Effendim, hich para banga yok dut" (My lord, I have no money). Whereupon, without further parley, the Kaimakam said briskly, "Git balk" (Go and see), and a sergeant marched the criminal off in a friendly way to the village, where no doubt a glass of arrack worked wonders.

The Turkish peasant is as good-natured as he is lazy, and except on compulsion he will hardly ever take the trouble to plough, sow, or reap his field. Consequently a rich and fertile country is rapidly becoming waste, simply from lack of energy.

After leaving Delibaba we passed through a magnificent rocky defile. The cliffs were so close together that fifty men could have held the pass. From here we went through several broken ravines until we came to Taar, where we stayed the night. We had great difficulty in getting new Zaptiehs at Taar, but a small bribe enabled us to start sooner than at one time seemed likely. From there we travelled to an Armenian village, where some men came out of their houses and asked what the English were going to do for them. They complained that the Kurds descended on them twice a year and annexed their cattle and horses, but they admitted that no women or children had been carried off, and not a single man killed. It may have been because it was close to Russia, but this village was

certainly prosperous and happy. At Toprak Kaleh, a frontier post, I was provided with two very fine Zaptiehs belonging to the Kurdish Hamidieh regiment, Bashibazouks, big men dressed in black Circassian uniform, and well mounted. Their Martinis were clean and in good order, not by any means always the case with irregular cavalry. On the way they talked freely, and confessed that they liked the Armenians quite as well as their Turkish officers. They could do the most marvellous tricks at full gallop, throwing up and catching their rifles, checking their horses and turning demi-voltes on their own ground.

Our next stopping place was Kara Kilissa, where we were put up in the Kaimakam's office, the khan being full of drunken soldiers. A doctor, six officers, and a police agent came to call soon after our arrival. I gave the police agent my *tezkerah*, the strange names on which occupied him till the next morning. The others stayed on, drank coffee, and looked curiously at my indiarubber bath, which Murad had filled with water before they came in. After the ordinary compliments the doctor astonished me by saying in French—

"J'apprends que vous avez beaucoup causé sur la route avec vos Kurdes?"

"Oui, j'ai causé un peu avec eux," I answered.

"Et de quelle affaire d'importance avez vous causé?"

"Quelle affaire d'importance peut exister entre moi et les Kurdes?" I asked.

This puzzled him for a minute, but he soon put another question.

"Pour quelle cause êtes vous venu en ce pays-ci?"

"Pour m'amuser."

He meditated on this for some time and then asked me if I were much amused?

The others were more civil, if less talkative. They none of them knew a word of Russian, although the object of their presence in the village was to watch the Russians. I saw they were half afraid that I was a spy, but the Vali's seal on my buyuruldu eventually satisfied the police inspector. The officers talked a good deal about the cavalry in the place, and there was something so odd about their repeated refusals to let me see it, that on my way out of the town the next morning I determined to satisfy my curiosity without their leave. So in the morning with the aid of a corporal I rode into the stables, and once there I understood why the officers had been so much against my seeing them. There were a few miserable starved jades in the stalls, and the whole place was filthy. In the barrack rooms the men were sitting unshaved and unwashed on long wooden settles. Their arms and accoutrements were hanging anyhow on the walls, and were rusty and dirty. Going out of the square I saw two of the officers of the night before scowling at me, and when I rejoined Hassan at the end of the street, I found that my Kurdish Zaptiehs had been taken away, and two impenetrable Turks substituted.

That day we crossed the great plain of Alasgird and sighted Mount Ararat. We met many camel caravans coming out of Persia, but there were hardly any cattle about, as the country here is dry and treeless, and except on the river bank there is little vegetation. In the evening we reached Diardin, a Kurdish settlement, and our last station before Bayazid. All the huts in Diardin are built of dried cow-dung, and have no windows. We had no tent, and the night was bitterly cold, so we were obliged to look for a room. It was a difficult matter to find one, and if the Kaimakam had not come to our help we should have been obliged to sleep out. He provided us with a room like the Jews' dungeon in the Tower, only smaller, dirtier, and less airy. The heating arrangements in these Kurdish huts are original. Half of the room is occupied by a mud ledge three feet by four. Underneath this is a hollow cave in which is piled the dung and charcoal used for fuel. This is lighted and the room soon becomes stiflingly hot. They have a similar system in Persia.

We were not sorry to leave Diardin, and continue our way to Bayazid. As we drew closer to the huge peak of Ararat, we met a great many "Kizil Bashis" (Red Heads), as the Turks call the Persians. We also overtook two convicts who had been exiled to Persia. When the Sultan wishes to rid Turkey of an evil-doer, he ships him over the Persian frontier, and the Shah returns the compliment. The Russians wisely refuse to harbour the convicts of either

monarch. These two wretches were walking bare-foot, tied together with a rope, and driven along by a mounted Zaptieh. I asked him of what crime they had been guilty, and he answered—

“Who knows? They are wicked men.”

We saw Bayazid for nearly four hours before we reached it. It is built on the face of a steep cliff, and is about ten miles from both the Russian and Persian frontiers. I had therefore now practically come to the end of my journey in Asia Minor, and was about to enter a perfectly fresh country inhabited by a very different people.

## CHAPTER IX

### BAYAZID

BAYAZID, like Metz, had once the reputation of being a virgin fortress, but it fell to Russia in 1878. Lying as it does high up on the face of a mountain flanked by frowning cliffs, it occupies a position of great natural strength, and if the Russians ever annex it, it will be one of the strongest cities in the world. At present the bastions are as destitute of guns as the barracks are of soldiers.

After toiling up a steep zigzag track for some time we at last came to the city gate and found ourselves in the main street. There is no regular bazar, and the place looks mean and sordid. Murad asked some loafers in the square where the khan was, and we were rather startled at being told, "Borda hich khan yok dur" (Here is no khan), as we had no letters of introduction to any one in the place, and had relied on finding a decent lodging. When we pushed our inquiries further, we found that there was a khan, but it was a dismal and dirty place, and so I decided to go and ask the Governor if he could not procure me a room in a house. The Mutessarif

was away collecting taxes, but we were told that the Vekil or deputy was at that moment reposing in his garden on the hill. I went there with one of the Zaptiehs, leaving Murad and the other to look for a place for us to sleep in.

At the garden door, an ugly black eunuch consented to take my buyuruldu to the Vekil, and in a few minutes he came back and showed me into the garden where some twenty Turks were sitting on carpets spread on the grass solemnly smoking. It was a farewell party to the General who was leaving for Ersinjan. The Vekil shook hands with me for full two minutes as if he had never shaken hands before in his life, and wished to make the most of it, and then a carpet was brought for me to sit upon. There are no chairs in Bayazid, and not being an expert in sitting on a carpet I did not know how to avoid turning my back on at least one-third of the company. So I took up a position facing the Vekil and was at once presented to the General who was sitting exactly behind me. I turned round and hoped the evening might be propitious to his nobility, and then we all sat silent staring into vacancy until coffee came, and loosed the Vekil's tongue. He asked me where I had put up.

"My servant is even now looking for a house," I said.

"There is no need," the Vekil answered. "My lord is the guest of the town."

This sounded very gracious, although I did not



realise what he meant by it, but not wishing to appear ignorant I merely said, "We are very glad, we are delighted, we are grateful to them all," which is the correct form of thanks.

The General asked if I had seen Zekki Pasha, and I said that I had lunched with him. After about twenty minutes' conversation I took my leave and rode back to the town.

Here I was met by a serious difficulty. The Persian Consul had heard that there was a foreigner in the town, and had at once sent his cavass to offer a lodging. Murad had gladly accepted the offer, and our baggage had been taken to the Persian consulate. In the meantime the Charshi Agassi or Head of the Street, a title borne by the chief merchant, had been ordered by the Vekil to prepare rooms for us in his house. This is what the Vekil had meant by saying that we were the guests of the town. The rooms had been made ready, and the Charshi Agassi came out to welcome us on our return from the Vekil's. At the same moment Murad, who had been watching for me from the roof of the consulate, met me with the news that we were already established there. Selim Effendi, the Charshi, was beginning to convince Murad that he must have made a mistake, and that I was his guest, when the cavass came round the corner, and said that his master was expecting me. We settled the question by proposing to stay one night with the Consul and the other with Selim. I had really only intended to pass one night in Bay-azid, but the situation was so perplexing that I was

glad to get out of it by the expedient of delaying my start for Persia. Both parties were apparently pleased by this decision, and we made our way to the consulate. It was a little house two stories high, with a yard in front planted with shrubs, called a garden by courtesy. Over the door hung a half-obliterated picture of a yellow lion with a female sun rising over his back, the heraldic emblem of the majesty of Persia.

The Consul, Mirza Abdul Kassim Khan, was sitting in the garden drinking tea when we arrived. He was a handsome man of about thirty, dressed in a loose dressing-gown, with gilt buttons blazoned with the lion and sun. On his head was a black lambskin fez or kola. He knew a little French as well as Turkish and Persian. Most of the Persians north of Teheran talk both tongues. He was an interesting and agreeable companion, and the arrangements of his household were very curious, so we were well repaid for having exercised a little diplomacy to accept his hospitality. The front part of the house consisted of two rooms divided by a passage. The stables were on the ground floor, and I saw a fire burning in a sort of coal-hole which I believe was the kitchen. We mounted to the rooms on the first floor by means of a ladder outside. The room on the right was the Consul's bedroom, sitting-room, and study, the one on the left was his dining-room and the offices of the consulate. It was here that I slept. The romantic feature of the house was the passage. It

led somewhere, where I did not find out, but I guessed to a harem.

The cavass, an old man in a greasy coat, was at once the Consul's cousin, deputy, secretary, armed attendant, groom, and I strongly suspect, his cook too. If so, he certainly shone in the last capacity, for we had a very good dinner. When it began to grow dark, we went upstairs and sat in the drawing-room. The Consul talked about my journey. He said the roads were not fit for a cart, and that I should have to hire pack-horses as far as Maku, whence I should be able to travel by post, which in Persia is called "chapper." In that way I should reach Tabreez in two days. He gave me a letter to Timur Pasha Khan the Governor of Maku, and a permit to pass the Persian Customs. While he was talking two of his friends came, one an Armenian schoolmaster, and the other the Turkish director of the Régie. At nine o'clock, when I was feeling very hungry, the cavass brought in a very small woodcock and a cucumber and handed them to the Consul. After eating a little, he held out a morsel in his fingers to me, which I refused, but I took some cucumber to avoid offending him, I thought the dinner was now over as it was past eleven, and I was going out to ask Murad to try and get me some bread when the cavass came in and announced dinner! We crossed the passage, and found the floor of my bedroom transformed into a table. We sat down cross-legged round the cloth, and had an excellent dinner

which I should have enjoyed but for the cramp I suffered from the unaccustomed position. When the meal was over the cavass made up the Consul's bed in the drawing-room, and I construed that as a sign that I was expected to go to bed too. I learnt afterwards that the Persians always dine very late, generally just before going to bed, but their cooking is better than the Turkish and they are more tolerant about drinking wine.

Early in the morning the Head of the Customs appeared, and announced that he was going to overhaul my luggage. Murad, however, only showed him what he thought expedient. As far as I could gather, the object of the examination was to find out whether any arms or ammunition of Turkish manufacture had been smuggled through. At all events they looked very suspiciously at my revolver until an officer certified it to be of English make, when it was returned.

About midday the Vekil came to call on me, so he said, but the real object of his visit was to carry on a long and bitter argument with the Consul about the Customs tariff, over the details of which the frontier officials are always quarrelling. Emigrants, immigrants, cattle, horses, goods are all taxed, and there is a great deal of smuggling. The frontier itself, being an uncertain line, is a fruitful subject for disagreements, and the hatred which exists between the Sunnis and the Shiahhs intensifies them. The Sunnis, roughly speaking, are all Turks and Arabs, and look upon the Sultan as the present Khalifa, or

successor to the Prophet. The Persians are the Shiah, and their spiritual head is an invisible "Twelfth Imam" who disappeared down a well about a thousand years ago, and has not been heard of since, although he is supposed to be still alive. Religious authority in Persia resides not in the Shah but in a chief Mollah or priest, who lives at Kerbela, a great place of pilgrimage for Persians. For the Shiah rarely goes the "Haj" or pilgrimage to Mecca, where he finds himself in the heart of the Sunnis.

After the Customs inspection we went to see the hammam and the mosque, both of them very shabby and dull. The bazar was disappointing too, except for Selim's shop, which was wonderful in the variety of its wares.

Murad succeeded in hiring two pack-horses to carry him and the baggage to Maku, our first station, and then we went to Selim's for the night. Sakri Effendi, one of his sons, took me up a hill overhanging one side of the town, and from there we watched the Armenians coming in from a festival which they had been celebrating in the country. They were trooping back in long lines, the women and girls in white with their faces half veiled, the men in the European clothes which suit them so badly; they all seemed quite happy and secure, and none of the Turks hooted or jeered at them; in fact they all seemed very good friends.

Selim provided me with a long, spacious room, well carpeted and cushioned. The walls were hung

with bleached calico, and the place was spotlessly clean. He took me over the house, and showed me his harem, looking towards Mount Ararat. The beds were simply mattresses spread on a divan in the window. We sat here talking for some time, and his children came in and out, girls and boys of all ages and sizes, but the mother or mothers did not appear. I saw women flitting about in the passages, but they always vanished at my approach. It was, however, a great concession, to be taken into his inner apartments at all.

At seven I sat down to a banquet of seventeen courses, all brought in at once on a gigantic salver. Selim talked a great deal about Constantinople. He had never been there, but he knew a Greek Pasha, whom I had met, at the Embassy, and also a member of the firm of Lynch Brothers, who had once passed through Bayazid. About one European came there in the course of a year, so his visit had made a deep impression. Selim said the Armenians were quiet and peaceable, and that the only difficulty the authorities ever had was with the Kurds. An American travelling round the world on a bicycle had just been killed in a Kurdish village near Bayazid by some Kurds, who thought he was a witch.

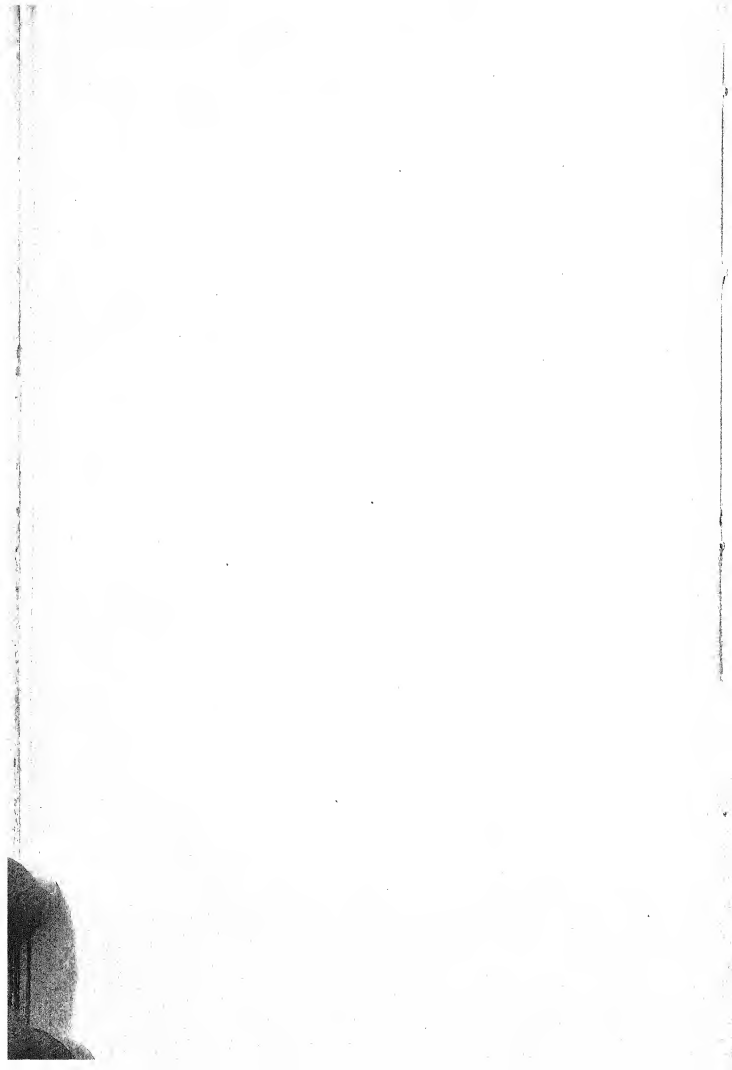
That night was my last in Turkey for some time. The next morning, accompanied by Sakri and two extra smart Zaptiehs, I started over the hills, and arrived at Kilissa Keui about three in the afternoon.

This was August 27th ; we had travelled from one end of Asia Minor to the other in thirty-eight days, twelve of which I had spent in towns on the road. The distance was about 1,040 miles, of which I had ridden 630, my average rate being  $28\frac{1}{2}$  miles a day.

PART II

*PERSIA NORTH TO SOUTH*





## CHAPTER I

### BAYAZID TO TABREEZ

THERE was nothing abnormal in the condition of Persia when I entered it in August, 1895, so my experiences there were probably very similar to those of other English travellers. Persia is now much more frequented by tourists than it was twenty years ago, although the roads and inns are as primitive as ever. The government, the nobles, the people, and the buildings are probably much the same as in the days of Darius. Yet Persia is an attractive country for the traveller, if only on account of its magnificent past. Its monarchy is the oldest in the world, its language is the oldest existing Aryan tongue, and has given more than any other to the literature of the East, and the ancient Mohammedan life is more faithfully preserved here than in Turkey, India, or even in Arabia. For Turkey, from its close neighbourhood to Europe, has absorbed many European customs, and India has been affected by English rule; but Persia still holds to the patriarchal way of life that existed more than a thousand years ago. With the exception

of Teheran, all the great cities of Persia are in the main untouched by any modern influences, and are deeply interesting on that account.

My chief object in going to Persia was not, however, to explore its towns. For some time I had been very anxious to see Afghanistan, and I knew enough of the difficulties in the way to understand that nothing short of an explicit and personal invitation from the Amir would make it safe to go there in an open and straightforward fashion. The other alternative was to slip in as best I could, and the only way this could be done was either through Persia or China. Sir Mortimer Durand, who not long since had conducted a special mission to the Amir, was British Minister at the Court of Persia, so I thought the best way of realising my former design on Afghanistan would be to go to Teheran first, and find out all that I could from him. At Tabreez, which is on the road from the Turkish frontier to Teheran, I had arranged to meet a friend of mine, Mr. Frank Labouchere, who was coming out *via* Odessa and Tiflis and who was going to accompany me further East. He had promised to be there by the end of August, and as it was now the 27th, and I had still 150 miles before me, there was no time to lose.

I hoped, therefore, that at Kilissa Keui, the Persian frontier village, I should be able to get post-horses at once, and travel south the same night. At the outskirts of the village my Zaptiehs drew rein, and said they must turn back. Murad and I

felt rather forlorn when they disappeared, as we had neither of us been in Persia before, and there seemed to be nothing in the way of a caravanserai in Kilissa. "Khan," which means "inn" in Turkey, is "lord" in Persia, and a halting place or inn is called a caravanserai. As far as Teheran we knew that nearly every one spoke a Turkish dialect, so our ignorance of Persian did not frighten us. Yet we did not feel quite happy as we entered our first Persian village. The old man whose pack-horses we had hired from Bayazid was deaf and half idiotic, and only shook his head foolishly when we told him to go to the posting establishment. At last Murad got hold of a villager who said he would go and ask, and he accordingly disappeared through a low door into a tower flanking a garden wall. In a few minutes a Persian officer in an ill-fitting blue frock coat came out and told me that there *was* a "Chapper Khaneh," but that it was badly horsed, and the post-horses were at that moment grazing on the mountains. However, if I would come in and see the Governor, he would do his best for me.

My friend was a curious looking individual, with curled and greasy black hair surmounted by a lambskin kola. He was effusively polite, and his Turkish was more intelligible than the patois the villager had spoken to Murad. He talked darkly of the disturbed state of the country, but said that the general would give me an order. Now, when a Turk says that the country is disturbed, it means a good deal, but the Persian is an inaccurate person, and

his statements have to be freely discounted. It is hard for a beginner to arrive at the truth about anything. The officer was so far right that there had been trouble between the Kurdish brigands and the "Hakims," or Governors of districts, but there was no organised insurrection. All the law and order which do exist in Persia depend on money payments. Either the Hakim pays the brigand chief a fixed sum on condition that he will not make a raid on a certain village, or if the Hakim has a respectable body of troops, the chief pays the Hakim to wink at his raids. Or both of them pay the officer in command of the troops to fight for them or remain neutral, as the case may be. A last case in this system of corruption is payment by the officer for the privilege of not being sent out against the enemy. The officials get along very pleasantly under this system of bribery, but the peasant who has to bear the expense of it naturally suffers a great deal. Yet it is said that the Persian people are happier and more peaceably governed, on the whole, than either the Turks or the Afghans.

We climbed up a narrow staircase into the tower, and then went into a small room quite bare of furniture, and found a young Persian sitting on his heels on the floor, saying his prayers. He went through the evolutions of getting up and sitting down again with marvellous ease. A Mollah, or priest, in a large white turban, was also praying, and in the garden outside I could see some women walking about, closely veiled, and laughing noisily.

In a few minutes the Governor came in. He was a big man, of about fifty, with bright red hair, and was dressed in loose flowing robes, and a turban. This was Timur Pasha Khan, Governor of Owarjuk, and Warden of the Turkish marches, the most powerful man in the north of Persia. He is subsidised annually by the Shah to maintain 2,000 cavalry, and is reputed to keep many more in his pay: The troopers I saw were raggedly dressed, and undisciplined, but they rode good horses and were well armed. Timur Pasha, who is very popular with his men, is of marked Tartar type, and his soldiers are nearly all Turks or Kurds, probably worth three times their number of pure-blooded Persians in battle.

I gave him a letter from the Persian Consul at Erzerum, which he read slowly, and then observed ingenuously that it asked him to provide me with post-horses and an escort to Khoi.

"The horses shall be sent for," he said, "and you shall choose which you like. About the escort, I can only give you soldiers as far as Kara Aineh, where my province ends. After that you will be in the territory of the Shahzadeh, who rules at Khoi, and he is no friend of mine. Therefore you may have some difficulty in getting from Kara Aineh to Khoi, but it is only eighteen farsakhs, and with a change of horses you can easily do it in one day."

(A farsakh, be it said, is the ancient parasang, and equals about four miles.)

All the evening we were pestered by applications

for brandy, but Murad stolidly denied that we had any, having carefully hidden our last bottle in his waist-belt.

We sat talking in the little tower until nearly eight, for one of the secretaries knew Russian, and all of them Turkish, so conversation was possible. They complained bitterly of the dull monotony of their life, and as far as I could make out they had very few occupations or amusements. There was some game ("shikar") in the mountains, but it was too hot to hunt or shoot in summer, and too cold in winter. Even where the climate does not impede, the Persians are not keen sportsmen. Every Persian hunting party in which we took part during our stay in the country was a fiasco.

We dined about eleven, an odious custom, when one has to get up at two the next morning. And this small allowance of sleep was destroyed by two caravans of a thousand camels passing my window during the night. Every twentieth camel had a bell, and no sooner had the sound of one died away, than we heard the next.

We chose the pack-horses in the dark of the early morning, and by four o'clock were ready to start. We were only able to go at a jog-trot, as the boxes were too heavy for a single horse, and yet could not be put on to two, for they would not balance separately. We took hours to pass the camels, too, when we overtook them as they were tied together in file, and our pack-horses got

continually entangled. Our escort consisted of four of the Governor's Irregulars, who talked a jargon of Kurdish and Turkish and gave us no help in any way. Altogether it was a dismal day. The country was dull, and I was glad when we got to Kara Aineh, a tumbledown little town of about 200 houses.

We stopped at the Post-house, and found that we should have to stay the night there, as there were neither horses nor soldiers available. The Ked-Khoda or head man of the village was away, and no one knew where. His deputy had no soldiers to give me, and said that I could not possibly travel without them, as there were about 150 Kurdish brigands in the hills, who robbed every one who passed that way. This was probably not true, but it was very perplexing, for I was running short of money, and did not want to incur the expense of staying longer in the village. Moreover, Murad was not nearly as much at home among the Shiah as he had been with the Sunnis, and his red fez made him an object of suspicion. The Persian order, written by Timur Pasha, did not impress the deputy in the least, and as I had a touch of fever and was not very fit, things looked rather black. Also the hovel we were in was absolutely poisonous. I can see the deputy now sitting on his haunches, and discouraging me from going on in the best Turkish he could command.

"There is but one thing to do," he said, "and that is to go back to Bayazid and come the other



way (*i.e.*, by Erivan). Here there are no soldiers, and it is unsafe to go on without them."

His tone was irritating, so I produced my English passport, which I knew he could not read, and said :—

"This is an order of the Queen of England. It orders all people on the way to help me, and if you do not, you will prepare trouble for yourself. I shall go on to-morrow morning, whether there is an escort or not, but it will be better for you if there is one."

"It is no good; it is impossible to get soldiers," said the deputy, going out of the room.

I went to sleep, feeling depressed, but at four o'clock next morning there were five mounted soldiers at the door, who wanted to know if we were ready to start. The deputy had despatched a message to the Ked-Khoda in the night, and the latter had sent word back that he had heard of the Queen of England, and would provide an escort for her subject. To avoid the trouble of the previous day with the boxes, Murad bought some light Kurdish horgines made of skins, and the things were bundled into them. Then we trotted off at a fair pace, the soldiers in front and on the flank letting off their rifles with a great deal of noise as they galloped along.

We passed several parties of Kurds, but they were all badly armed with shot guns and rifles of their own make, and made no attempt to attack us. We changed horses and escort at mid-day, and

then rode fast through a long defile and over a ridge of hills, to Khoi which we reached at about eight o'clock. We had covered the eighty miles from the frontier in two days, but as we had had long waits for horses and soldiers, and the cumbersome luggage on the first day had hindered us, it is hardly fair to take this journey as a typical example of Persian "chapping."

Khoi is a walled town with a fosse, a barbican, and a drawbridge. Its situation at the head of three valleys is beautiful, and for six or seven miles outside the town there are pretty gardens, a characteristic feature of Persia. The Governor, Menu Chur Mirza, is a prince of the blood, a Shahzadeh, or Shah's son, but the Shahs of Persia have such large families that the distinction is a very general one. This Shahzadeh was courteous and intelligent, and his city, so far as the police arrangements were concerned, was well governed. At the chief caravanserai the door-keeper told us there was no room, so we went on to the Chapper Khaneh where the postmaster and a friend, Mahomet Ali by name, both in blue frock coats and kolahs, came out and offered to take us to a house where we could stay the night. When we reached the house we found that it consisted of a garden with a tank in the middle, and one large room opening on to it by a glass window. As it was a hot night I settled to sleep in the garden, and Murad, by the light of a lantern, found a good place to unroll my bed under a tree, where I lay down while he got the dinner.

The postmaster sat down too, and discussed the local news. While we were talking, Mahomet Ali came up and said that the man to whom this garden belonged had come back unexpectedly, and would we go into the next one? It seemed an odd request, but we agreed, and Murad began to move our things. I was in front, and had just got into the other garden, when Murad rushed in crying out—

“Tabanja gitdi!” (The pistol has gone).

He went on to say that a soldier standing at the door had snatched the revolver from him as he was carrying the things across, and had bolted into the street. This was no trifling matter, as revolvers cannot be bought in Persia, and it is unsafe to travel without one. The postmaster took it very coolly, saying that it would be found in the morning, but knowing that unless it were traced at once it would never be seen again, I told one of the Kurds to go to the Prince's palace with the letter I had for him, and to say I was coming myself.

The postmaster at once tried to stop him. I had been suspicious of the postmaster before, and now his excitement convinced me that he knew something about the revolver. So I said to the soldier in Turkish—

“My friend, unless you now go running to the Prince, you will receive no money for the journey.”

This acted like a charm. The man ran off

and Murad and I stood in the doorway with the postmaster cursing us. Nothing came of my appeal to the palace for about fifteen minutes, and then there was a great noise in the street, and a flashing of lights, and my soldier rushed up, crying—

“The Prince’s chief eunuch is now coming with his farrashes to visit my lord.”

In a moment the garden was blazing with torches carried by men in red, the farrashes or “carpet-spreaders” of the Prince.

The eunuch sat down and began to talk Persian, but when I told him I did not understand it he glided into excellent Turkish. He told me with superb confidence that my revolver should be found immediately, and that the Prince would be glad to see me the next day. He had hardly finished his sentence when in came three soldiers, one of them carrying the revolver. He put it down sullenly, and went out.

“He has already been punished,” said the eunuch, and when I thanked him, he went on—

“In Khoi a thief’s business is a poor one, for the Prince is a wise Governor. God keep you!” and then he and his farrashes filed out, and I had dinner; but the postmaster had not done with me yet.

We sold my horse next day, as we were short of money, and then Mahomet took me round the bazars, which had a very interesting assortment

of wares. Into the mosques I could not go, as the Shiahs are much more fastidious about Christians than the Sunnis; they were even against showing me the hammam. However, Mahomet managed to get me in, and it was well worth seeing. All round the walls were huge pictures representing scenes from the lives of Rustam and Afrasiab, the great heroes of Persian romance, painted in the most startling colours, and without any attention to perspective. The attendants all had the palms of their hands and feet, and their finger-nails, dyed with henna, a red cosmetic.

The Shahzadeh received me in the afternoon in the garden of his palace. He said that the road to Tabreez was quite safe, but as to the districts outside his rule, "God alone knows." He advised me to take a caravan; that is, to hire horses all the way to Tabreez, instead of posting. I told Murad this when I returned from the palace, and he went into the bazar, and made arrangements with an Arab owner of horses to transport ourselves and the luggage to Tabreez. The next morning at six, the hour he was timed to appear, there was no sign of the Arab "chavadar," as a man who lets horses is called in Persia, and I found that the postmaster had threatened to make it hot for him in Tabreez if he went with me. The posting in Persia is farmed out; the postmaster owned the line, and it meant a loss to him if we went by caravan and not by chapper. Besides threatening the Arab, he had given out in the bazars that no one was to come forward

to let horses to us. The postmaster is a very big man in a Persian town, and we seemed at his mercy. However, we still had faith in the Shah-zadeh, and, not wishing to bother him again directly, we sent Mahomet Ali to the Chapper Khaneh, where he proclaimed in a loud voice that the Firengi was going to take leave of the Prince. As I had already said good-bye, the postmaster understood the meaning of this, and when Murad sent the two soldiers to fetch the horses from the Arab's house, he offered no opposition. We paid the Arab half his hire to Tabreez, and told him that if he got into trouble through coming with us, the Consul would see him through it. So he was persuaded in spite of his fear of the postmaster, and we left Khoi about one o'clock.

We crossed a long ridge of hills, and came down a very steep mountain side by a remarkable natural staircase worn in the rock, to the shores of Lake Urumia. The view of this immense inland lake from the top of the col was most lovely in the sunset. The water is salt and very shallow, and the shores are thick with reeds haunted by wildfowl. We could not make much progress along the lake shore, as the going was very heavy ; and we passed nothing of interest, except a Persian shopkeeper, accompanied by a mysterious lady closely veiled. She was dressed in the long blue cloak, affected by nearly all Persian women, and wore baggy green trousers, fastened in round the ankle. She was of course riding cross-legged. We got into con-

versation with the man, but he was very careful that the lady should not take part in it.

At Sofian, the last station before Tabreez, we slept in a really fine house ; the guest-room looking into a marble court, with a fountain and trees. The next day we arrived at Tabreez, and there, at the British consulate, I found Labouchere, who had been before me by about a week.

## CHAPTER II

### TABREEZ AND ARDABIL

TABREEZ, or Tauris, the capital of Azerbaijan, has a population of 200,000, and covers more ground than any other city in Persia. What Shiraz is to the south, and Meshed to the east, Tabreez is to the north and west. It is the junction of several important roads, and a great trade emporium. The caravans coming from the sea by way of Trebizond and Erzerum, and from the Caucasus by Tiflis and Erivan are concentrated at Tabreez. Politically, as the residence of the Valiahd, or Crown Prince, it is second only to Teheran in importance while it surpasses the capital in its historical interest. The immense area of ground it covers is due to the number of gardens. Every house has a large garden, but as they are surrounded by high mud walls, the streets are dull except for the bazars, which instead of lying all together as in most towns in the east, are scattered about in the different quarters. The elevation is 4,000 feet above sea-level, and although at the solstice the heat is

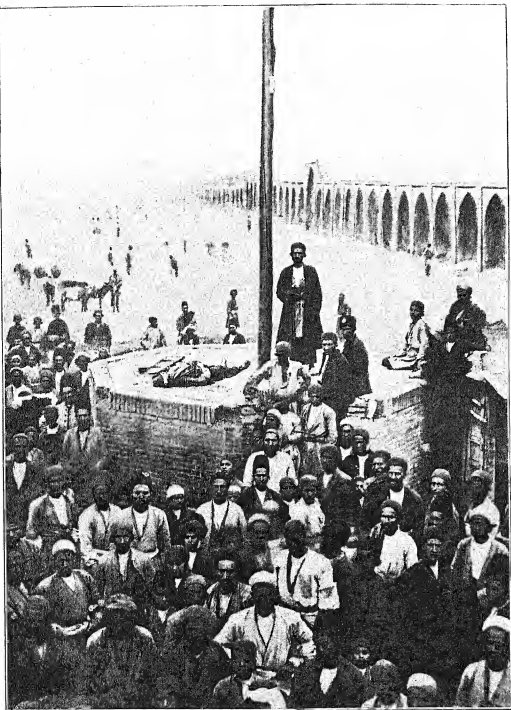


oppressive, the climate is healthy. The inhabitants speak a Turkish patois, but understand Persian. They are of mixed race, and are very fanatical. The observance of the feast of Muharrem which commemorates the death of Hassan and Huseyn, the two great Shiah martyrs, is celebrated here with more enthusiasm than in any other part of Persia, and the Azerbaijan soldiers have the reputation of being fervent and dangerous Mussulmans. Yet the new religion of Persia known as "Babism" has made some way even in Tabreez.

There are several notable buildings, first and foremost the Blue Mosque, built by Jehan Shah in 1440, and perhaps the masterpiece of all Oriental architecture. It is now in ruins, but a great part of the façade with its wonderful blue tiling remains to show what its pristine magnificence must have been. The fine old Ark or Citadel built by Ali Shah was the scene of the Bab's death after the rising of Babism in 1854, and from its summit faithless wives are still flung down into the moat. An execution of this kind took place while we were in the city, and the wretched woman's body lay for a whole day in the ditch below. The commercial prosperity of Tabreez must date back to a very early time, for Mandeville says of it—

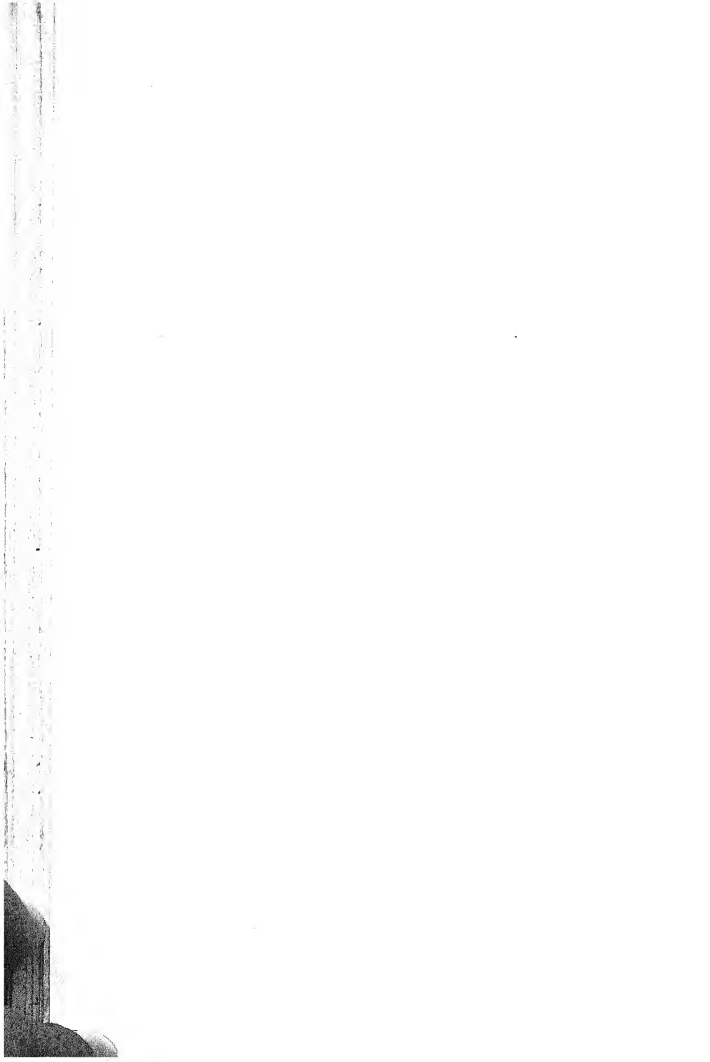
From that mountain (Ararat) we go to the city of Thaurizo, which was formerly Taxis, a very fair and great city, and one of the best in the world for merchandize, and it is in the land of the Emperor of Persia.

Mandeville then goes on to say that the Emperor



*[To face p. 100.]*

EXECUTION OF PERSIAN CRIMINAL.



draws a great revenue from the "marchants" of that city.

Trade at the present time is chiefly in cloth, tea, iron, tin, sugar, cotton; and besides the indigenous population of Persian and Armenian traders, there are many Levantines and Jews, and one or two big English and Russian houses. There is a branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia in Tabreez, the two English managers of which very kindly offered to put us up, and we passed a very pleasant ten days with them, living a civilised life again for a short time.

The day before my arrival there had been a bread riot, and a great many Persians had gone to the British Consulate-General to ask for relief from the famine, and protection from the local authorities. It speaks much for the ability and energy of our representatives that our prestige is as great as it is, for the political importance of Russia is greater. She keeps up a large and imposing staff of secretaries; with dragomans and a strong Cossack escort. The proximity of the Trans-Caucasian provinces also makes the transport of Russian goods into Azerbaijan an easy matter. Nevertheless English trade is still the larger, and that in spite of the tedious and expensive transport from Trebizond, due to the prohibitory duties charged on the Caucasus railway.

Our Consul-General, was staying at Nemitabad, a few miles off, as was Prince de Bija, who was temporarily in charge of the Russian consulate. The latter is an accomplished and able man, and

is looked upon as a rising light in the diplomatic service, which in Russia is amalgamated with the consular corps. He has now been promoted to a diplomatic post at Tiflis. He was very kind to us, giving us letters to his colleague at Ardabil, and telling us much about the shooting in the Elburz mountains.

We busied ourselves during our stay in Tabreez with buying fresh horses, as we had settled to caravan, the chapper in Azerbaijan being notoriously bad, and in looking out for another servant. Murad was unable to do everything for two of us, and besides he knew no Persian, a drawback as we got further south. We succeeded in getting a young Persian of about twenty-three, who could talk both Persian and Turkish, for five tumans a month (£1). As he was a Shiah we were afraid at one time that he might not get on with Murad, but we were wrong. They became great friends, and with representatives of both sects of Islam in our suite, we were seldom at a loss wherever we halted, for down to Teheran the Persian and Turkish elements are about equal.

We had decided not to go straight to Teheran, but to cross the great range of the Elburz mountains and see Ardabil, an ancient Armenian town, and from there to follow the Caspian Littoral to Resht, the chief northern port in Persia, and a great depôt of Russian trade. From there we could continue to Teheran by Kazvin. We calculated on arriving there at the end of September, and if I had not been

laid up by an attack of fever in Resht, we should have been about right in our calculations.

We rode out to neighbouring villages during our stay in Tabreez, and found the roads very bad owing to the quantity of holes going down into the "canauts" or underground channels by which water is brought to the city from the mountains. These canautes exist all over Persia, and date back to the most ancient times. Many of them are now blocked up, and in others fish are caught.

On September 11th we started for Ardabil, the caravan consisting of Labouchere and myself, our two servants, two Persian soldiers, and the owner of the horses. Labouchere had a Paradox and I a sporting Lee-Metford, besides our guns, but as far as Resht we only got snipe and partridges, which were plentiful along the road. The peasants were very pleasant and hospitable, being quite content with one or two shillings for our board and lodging. At Sirab we stayed in a sort of private caravanserai, where we had a pretty little room looking out on to a court with the usual tank surrounded by trees in the middle. There were carpets and cushions on the floor, and on the walls rows of little shelves stacked with rolls of ladies' gala clothes, and brass and earthenware pots well burnished. There were also a great number of enamelled and painted wooden boxes, fastened with large, ungainly padlocks. The old man who owned the house took us out in the morning to see the little bazar, which was full of people, and which we photographed with a

Kodak to the interest and alarm of the inhabitants, who took us for enchanter.

On leaving Sirab we got into green country and gradually approached the great chain of the Elburz mountains. This range, starting from the Caucasus, fringes the southern shores of the Caspian, and finally joins the Suleyman range in the north of Afghanistan. Just before reaching Nir, a place close under the peaks of the Elburz, we nearly lost Mahomet and the pack-horses. We always arranged that he should start from the lunching place earlier than we did, as he went at a slower pace. On this particular day we saw nothing of him until ten o'clock at night, as he had missed the road. As he had all our money, clothes, cartridges, and stores, we suspected the worst, and our joy was great when he came in, just as we had given him up.

On the fifth day after our departure from Tabreez, we reached Ardabil. The Armenian agent of the Bank came out to meet us, and offered us a lodging in his house, which was in the heart of the bazars. We had only intended to stay one day, but there was some difficulty in getting horses to cross the unfrequented tracks of the Elburz, and our Armenian hosts would not let us go from kind notions of hospitality. Armenian dinners last from about six to midnight—interminable toasts and speeches filling up the time after the substantial meal is disposed of. On the second night of our visit we dined with the Governor, a rich Hakim named Nazmi Sultaneh. To get a reputation for wealth is doubtful policy in

the East, but Nazmi had hitherto managed to evade tyrannical exactions, and he deserved to be let alone for he is a popular Governor, and does his best for the people.

He sent his farrashes with lanterns to bring us to the Palace at about seven o'clock, and on our arrival we were taken into a room where we sat playing chess and backgammon until ten when dinner was served. The Hakim took us by the hand and we sat down to a meal, half French, half Persian, the Persian half being the better. The drinks were strong white wine from Shiraz, inferior Russian brandy, and fermented milk. Knives and forks were supplied, but the Persians held their forks in their right hand, as it is a gross breach of manners, and also a backsliding from the principles of the Koran, to eat with the left hand.

The chief subject of conversation was Baku, the great Russian oil port on the Caspian. The Governor had just been there on a visit, and he was full of the power, the learning, and the elegance of the Russian nation.

Before leaving Ardabil we went to see the old Sheyr, or shrine where the kings of the Sefavi line lie buried. The tomb was built in 1072 A.D. by Sufi ed Din Isak, founder of the dynasty, and was further beautified by his descendants. At the death of Ismael Sufi Shah who introduced the Shiah religion into Persia in the middle of the sixteenth century, the shrine became a royal mausoleum. It has large silver doors plated with thin gold, two



splendidly carved sandal-wood tomb-lids inlaid with ivory, and cornered with jewelled capitals, set with immense rubies and turquoises. There are some ancient embroidered velvets hung on the walls, and a steel roof with some half obliterated paintings on it. The enamelled tiles on the walls are very vivid in colouring, but commonplace in design. The Sheyr is, however, chiefly famous for its collection of old blue china, and ancient Persian books and manuscripts which we saw through a grating. It was from this shrine that the celebrated "Ardabil" carpet came, and although the custodian told us that no more of its treasures were to be sold, the authorities are so mercenary that there would probably be little difficulty in purchasing some of them.

## CHAPTER III

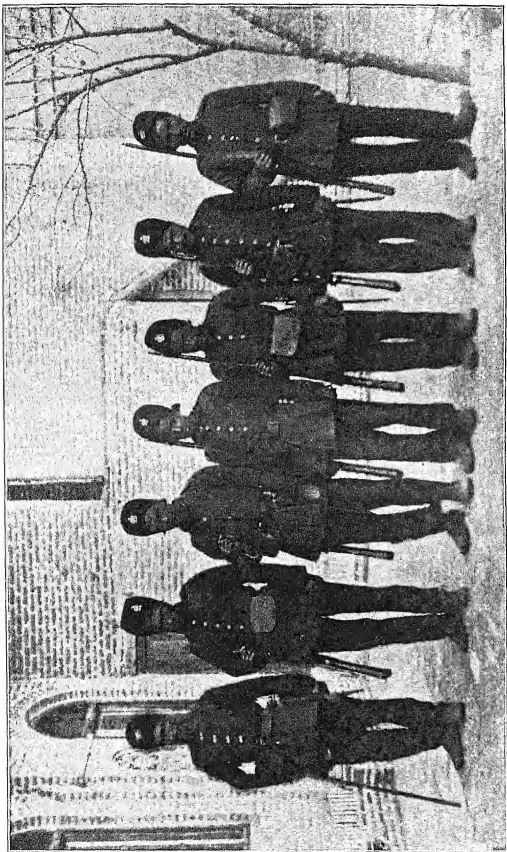
### THE ELBURZ AND CASPIAN LITTORAL.

WE had great difficulty in getting together the caravan to cross the Elburz mountains. Persian caravan drivers are the worst class of Persian to have any dealings with, and their dilatory ways are most irritating. We did succeed in making a start on the day we had fixed, but not until very late, and we had to stay the night in a small village just outside Ardabil, and delay our ascent of the mountains until the next morning. We then climbed steadily, and soon left all the Talish tents behind. The Talish are a mixed Turco-Persian race, living in large mushroom shaped tents, and like the Kurds, addicted to plunder. At six in the evening we came to a ruined caravanserai, and as the two soldiers told us that we were now at the highest point of the path, and that there was no village for another five hours, we decided to halt here. We slept in the open, and in the early morning it grew very raw and cold. The result was that I caught a chill, which afterwards developed into a fever, and compelled me to stay a fortnight in Resht. While we

were dressing, Murad who had gone down to the stream to wash his frying pan, came running back and shouted,

"We are surrounded by brigands! Many of them are on the hills watching us, and they all have Marteens."

Marteen is the Turkish for any breech-loading rifle, and is derived presumably from Martini-Henry. We took our field-glasses and climbed up on to the ruined wall of the caravanserai to reconnoitre. There were certainly little groups of horsemen on the heights on either side, all armed with guns of some sort. We slipped down and got out our rifles, providing Mahomet with the spare revolver, of which he seemed very nervous. The two soldiers had meanwhile saddled their horses, and ridden up the two opposite slopes. Labouchere followed one and I the other, while the two servants and Mahomet hastily packed up the things and put the packs on the horses ready for a start. They were quite safe from any long range shots under the walls of the caravanserai, so we did not mind leaving them. The hillsides were very steep, so that Labouchere and his soldier could not see the men above them, although they could see those above me, and I was in the same case. We signalled to Labouchere what his opponents were doing, and he replied as to the movements of ours. Presently the brigands began to move downwards, so we picketed our horses, and began to climb straight up over the rocks, until we were at a higher level than they were. In this way



PERSIAN INFANTRY.

*To face p. 110.*



we outflanked the Talish gentlemen of the road, and they were now in an awkward position, as they were on the exposed slope of the hill, and we had the shelter of the rocks. We shouted to Murad, who had now reached the stream, to stay where he was, and the brigands, suddenly becoming aware that they were between three fires, thought the game hopeless, and called out that they were only out hunting, and thought we might wish to join them—a very sorry deception. Then they rode off with considerable speed, of which we were glad, as we could hardly have fought them. No doubt they were robbers, and they were probably prospecting on the hill to see how we were armed and what were the chances of plunder, and we heard not long afterwards that the next caravan which crossed the mountains by that track was robbed by a party of eight brigands corresponding in description to our friends. The route was in fact a rather dangerous one, and we had made a mistake in not taking a stronger escort, but a long immunity from attack in Asia Minor had made me over-bold. However, it is doubtful if more Persian soldiers would have been of any use to us. They are little good in an emergency, and are often cowards of the worst type, who are never in the least ashamed of their cowardice.

We kept along the crest of the ridge and skirted the shoulder of two big mountains with snow peaks. When we had rounded the second bluff, we caught a distant glimpse of the Caspian, glittering in the sunlight, and after that we began to descend rapidly

into a dense forest. The path was winding and overgrown with weeds, and the change of temperature very marked. The sun beat on us fiercely, and the warm miasma which rose from the jungle below all the way to the sea-shore, was heavy and unpleasant, and very fatiguing.

The summit of the pass had marked the border of the province of Gilan, and the change in the people and their manner of life was evident in the first village we entered, which lay some six miles down the valley. The houses here are all built with sloping red-tiled roofs, because of the enormous rainfall. In all other parts of Persia the houses have flat roofs. The women are allowed to go about unveiled, but all of them look very unhealthy, as do the children. Fever and ague have a great deal to do with it. The climate is very bad, for not only is the Caspian Sea eighty odd feet below the level of the Mediterranean, but there is a poisonous marsh running along by the coast, the exhalations from which would weaken any people. Wild boar, bear and snakes abound, and it is said that there are panthers and tigers too, although they are rarely seen. The scenery is lovely, recalling the prettiest parts of Devon and the Isle of Wight, until one gets into the jungle proper, when the high, green reeds, and luxuriant undergrowth, make one think of the swamps of Central America. We slept twice in this jungle, and then came to Kerganrut, a quaint walled town, with platformed houses, lying in a hollow. From here we followed a stream

which led us on to the long sandy shore of the Caspian. The total area of this immense inland sea is nearly 180,000 square miles. The water is very salt and buoyant, and on the coast there are several naptha springs, the best known being those at Baku. The chief rivers flowing into the Caspian are the Volga, which enters the north-western corner at Astrakhan, the Ural, which forms the boundary of Russia in Asia, the White River, or Sefid Rud, flowing in near Resht, and the Aras which drains the Caucasus. Finally there is the Atrek separating the Persian province of Astrabad from the Turkoman desert, now under Russian rule. The Southern Littoral is the only coast of the Caspian which still belongs to Persia, but it is far more fertile than the other three, and contains strips of country of a widely different character. First comes the sandy sea-shore, not much over a hundred yards wide, abounding in eagles, vultures, herons, and cranes. Salmon from fifteen to twenty pounds are caught by the natives in the little inlets, and lagoons which fringe this shore, and there is also a great catch of sturgeon. The second belt of the Littoral consists of the jungle, which is full of all sorts of game. So much of the marsh as is reclaimed has made good arable land on which wheat, barley, cotton, and maize are grown with some success. Beyond the jungle lies the forest, where giant acacias, walnuts, wild apples, and camel-thorns grow in profusion, interspersed with fig-trees, medlars, mulberry-trees, and beneath all a rank and



luxuriant undergrowth of weeds. There are many partridges and pheasants, and the air is thick with brilliantly coloured fly-catchers, and butterflies, among which we recognised the spotted footman and the purple emperor. Above the forest, tower the barren mountain tops, generally snow-covered, and inhabited by bears.

There are only two harbours on the southern shore, Enzeli and Bundergez, the ports of Resht and Astrabad respectively. They are both bad and uninteresting ports, for the Caspian has a very meagre history. It is known to have been the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire, and Pomponius Mela writes of it—"Ultra Caspium quindam esset ambiguum aliquamdiu fuit," but it is rare to come across a reference to it in the ancient historians.

My fever grew worse from sleeping in the pestilential jungle, and I could hardly sit my horse after leaving Kerganrut. But there was nothing to be done but to try and keep on to Enzeli, where we hoped to find a doctor. We still had two soldiers with us, not the heroes of our encounter with the brigands, but two dark-faced Talish, who talked a jargon which Mahomet alone could understand. One day as we were riding along the sea-shore watching the mirages which are common on the Caspian, we were met by an officer and a dozen ragged soldiers on horseback. He said that he had heard that we were riding along the shore, and had come to ask us to lunch with him in his village

which lay about two miles further on. We accepted his offer, and rode on with him to a little group of wigwams with wattled roofs, the largest of which was his house. There was nothing in it but a couch covered with rugs, and a skin hung up to do duty for a door. The villagers stared at us from behind this skin. They were all pale and wan from ague, and our host said that every child in the place was sick with malaria. While we were lunching, he told us with a great deal of hesitation that we had better not proceed with our journey. We were just on the borders of Kerganrut and Enzeli, and two days ago the Governor of Enzeli, by way of avenging some private injury, had hanged a soldier of the Governor of Kerganrut, and there was now an open feud between the two districts. Until the Governor-General at Resht interfered, no one could safely cross the border. He therefore implored us either to turn back or to go to Resht by the inland road, avoiding Enzeli. But we were inclined to suspect exaggeration, and wanted to see Enzeli, so we set off again along the shore. At the end of the first mile the entire escort including our own two soldiers, turned round and galloped off. We had been expecting this and were not taken by surprise. We then went on ahead of the caravan, rifles in hand, and rounding a clump of trees, suddenly came upon a village lying on the opposite side of a stream. Between twenty and thirty villagers were seated on the bank, armed with matchlocks, apparently on the look out for the

enemy. We had settled to go on as if we knew nothing of any quarrel, so we made for the ford. As we got a footing on the other side, I closed the bolt of my rifle which had come open. Instantly an old villager came up and said—

“There is no need of a gun, Sahib; we are all friends here. With Firengis there is no quarrel.”

Then they asked us to sit down, and brought us tea. Just then Murad and the horses appeared round the curve which hid the village, and when he saw us in the middle of the group with our horses being held some way off, he naturally thought that we were in difficulties. However, we shouted to him to bring over the pack-horses, and after drinking the tea and giving the headman a kran ( $4\frac{1}{2}$  £), which appeared to satisfy him, we went on our way to Enzeli. Close to the town we met the then Governor-General and his suite, gorgeously dressed, going for a picnic. He is a brother of Nasr ed Din, the late Shah. Resht is a miserable place to live in, and there is a saying: “Will you kill him or make him Governor of Resht?”

We got into Enzeli about three o'clock, and hired a long, undecked rowing-boat to take us, horses and all, across the harbour, and on the opposite point we found a little Russian hotel, where we put up.

## CHAPTER IV

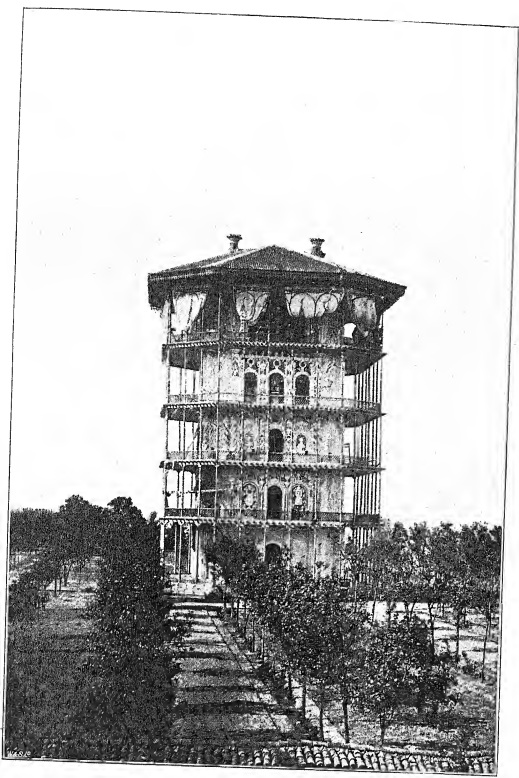
### ENZELI AND RESHT

ENZELI is the chief Persian port on the Caspian, although the approach to it is dangerous, and its anchorage exposed. Lying as it does on the direct route from London and St. Petersburg to Teheran and the Gulf, it may some day become of more importance than it is at present, but the harbour will have to be materially altered to be of any real value. The town has a population of about 10,000, and lies at the narrow entrance to a lagoon call the Murda, or Dead Water. At this estuary rises a dangerous bar with only three feet of water above it at high tide, and steamers from Baku and Petrovsk are frequently unable to enter the port, or even to land passengers by boat. Passing through this channel one gets into the lagoon, which is full of wildfowl and fish. A few caiques and two small launches are the only means of crossing it. South of Enzeli, on the lower shore of the lagoon, there is another narrow channel, which ends at a wretched little hamlet called Peribazar, whence there is a *chaussée*, or driving road to Resht.

The Russians have rebuilt this *chaussée* between Peribazar and Resht, and are constructing a carriage road to Teheran. This may be followed by a railway, the only difficulty being the Karzan Pass. Projects have been on foot for years, and latterly a new scheme has been disclosed to connect Baku Resht and Trans-Caspia by a railway along the coast. This would practically turn the South Caspian Littoral into a Russian province, but it would take some considerable time to lay.

Enzeli is a pretty red-tiled town, thronged by traders and seamen, many of them Russians. We only stayed there one night, and then crossed the lagoon to Peribazar whence a ramshackle old fly took us to Resht. The road lay through the jungle and it poured with rain the whole way. This gave me a fresh chill, and the fever was worse the next day. At Resht we put up at an inn kept by a Greek called Panidis, and were there fifteen days while I did my best to get well.

Resht is renowned for having a higher rainfall than any other city in the world, and its climate is additionally unhealthy on account of the exhalations from the marsh and jungle which surround it. The staple trade is in cotton, maize, and rice, and silk is produced in small quantities. An attempt has been made of late to grow tea, and is believed to have been successful although little is yet known about it. The bazars are covered in, and the place has an European look, although its sanitary condition is worse, I hope, than anything to be seen in Europe.



SHAH'S TOWER, IN ENZELI.

*[To face page 118.]*



The streets are nearly always knee-deep in mud from the rain, and the combined smell of rotting vegetation and open sewers is atrocious.

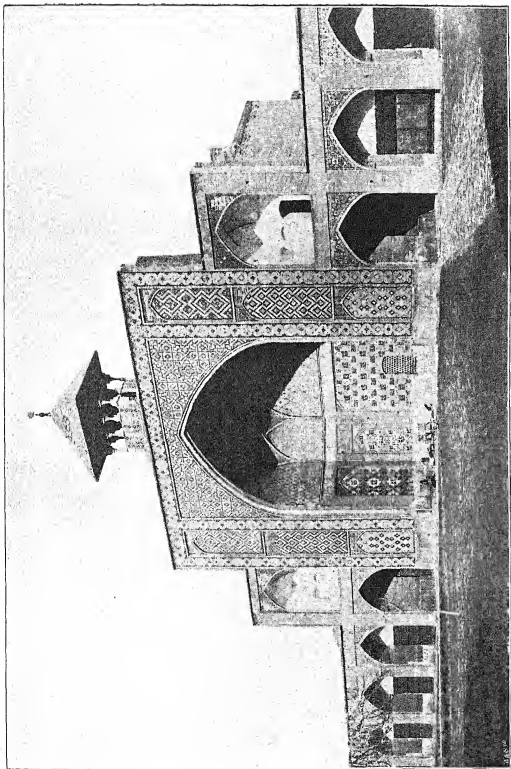
The total population is estimated at 25,000 and the language generally spoken in the bazars is Persian, although Turkish and Russian are both understood. Some Russian Armenians carry on a brisk trade, which is encouraged and protected by their Consul. British interests are relatively small.

Our consulate was too small to house us, so we were left to the tender mercies of Panidis, the most extortionate innkeeper we had ever been brought in contact with. Labouchere succeeded in finding a doctor, named Mirza Said, a Kurd who had been converted to Christianity in Hamadan, and had gone to England to study medicine. When we met him he was on his way home after some years in a hospital. He was of great use, and successfully pulled me through the fever. When I was better we all three started for Teheran, as Mirza Said's road lay with ours as far as Kazvin. On the fifth day after leaving Resht, we entered the province of Irak Ajemi, the largest in Persia except Khorasan. The country now began to change, and after crossing the Karzan Pass we left the trees altogether, and found ourselves on the vast brown plain of which Persia is mainly composed. The Chapper Khanehs on the road were fairly clean and comfortable. There was always a single room over the gate called the Bala Khoneh, or upper room (balcony), and this was let to us for dining



and sleeping. The plan of the Chapper Khaneh is always the same, a square walled enclosure built of mud with a frontage of about thirty feet, the walls rising to half that height. On either side of the gate are small rooms meant for the servants and the naib or postmaster. There are supposed to be about twenty horses in each Chapper Khaneh, but there are seldom more than ten, and these the most wretched sore-backed animals. The official charge for riding post is  $1\frac{1}{4}$  krans for each horse per farsakh, that is, about sixpence for every four miles. The average distance of a stage is twenty miles. The record ride from Resht to Teheran (190 miles) is thirty-two hours.

On the 15th of October we crossed the Karzan Pass, and were caught in a snowstorm. The climb up the pass was very steep and rough, but the descent was easy, and we soon arrived at Kazvin, a large town of 25,000 inhabitants, from which there is a carriage road to Teheran. It is a prosperous place, rejoicing in an enlightened Governor. There is a good bazar, although the close proximity of the capital rather dwarfs its trade, and a splendid avenue of trees leads up to the palace. The Governor has not only made the road to Teheran, but has built a mosque with a fine blue and gold enamelled dome; a stone caravanserai, and a good Mehman Khaneh or guest house, answering to an hotel in other countries. Kazvin is famous for its grapes, which are very sweet and small and greatly sought after, as they make most



KAZVIN ROYAL MOSQUE.

[To face p. 120.]





excellent wine. We stayed a day here and having secured a carriage and a cart for the baggage, started for Teheran. The weather was much colder than at Resht, and when we were crossing the plain the next day the wind was very keen. We had some difficulty in changing horses on the road, but at last on the 19th of October we reached Teheran, where we put up at the hotel. The distance from Constantinople was 1,610 miles, of which I had ridden 1,120. We stayed in Teheran over three weeks to settle our plans, and to give me time to pick up my strength.

## CHAPTER V

### TEHERAN

THE population of Teheran is 220,000, 200,000 of whom are called Mussulmans, but they are all sorts, Sunnis, Shiahs, Sufis, and Babis. The remaining 20,000 are Jews, Armenians, a few Guebres, or fire-worshippers, now much despised, and about 150 Europeans. The English, French, Russians, Austrians, Dutch, and Americans keep up Legations, and the Turks an Embassy. The chief public institutions are the Imperial Bank of Persia, and the Indo-European Telegraph. The clerks of the latter are all English, generally non-commissioned officers of the Royal Engineers. The Bank is at last beginning to be a success, and exercise an influence on the turnover of money, more especially as it has the mint concession in its hands. The Persian's natural instinct when he has money is to hoard it in specie, but he has now been induced to believe in the value of a bank-note in exchange for silver, and although many rich men of the old school go on storing up the notes as they did the silver, yet a few of the more enlightened

have grasped the meaning of interest, and its advantages.

The bazars in Teheran lie altogether in the southern quarter of the city, and are stocked with cheap European goods, as well as those which Persia still produces. A tram line runs round them, and this, with a shaky five mile railway to the mosque of Shah Abdul Azim, constitutes the iron roads of the country. The largest building is the Shah's Palace, a stucco erection, with painted gates, and a great deal of brightly-coloured tiling and plaster.

The British Minister told us it was hopeless to try and get into Afghanistan without a special invitation from the Amir, so we fell back on the project of applying to the Russian War Minister for leave to visit the Trans-Caspian provinces, whence we intended to go by the Pamirs into the north-western provinces of China, and then turn north, and come home by the Steppe and the Trans-Siberian railway. This plan once decided upon, we still had to wait a long time for the various permits required. So we settled to spend the time in a trip to Shiraz, across the almost unknown bit of country between that city and Shuster, then down the Karun, and up the Tigris to Baghdad, and so across Kurdistan back to Teheran. We had seen all the sights of Teheran, the Shah's Zoo, where a few very wild lions and tigers are kept in gimcrack cages; one of his anderuns, or harems, empty, of course; we had dined with Turks, Russians, and Persians, and had

seen the Shah enter his capital in state. We had inspected the bank and the telegraph office, and the town fortifications, built on a model of Vauban's in 1870, and an easy prey to modern artillery; and, lastly, we had wandered into the inner confines of the Imperial Zenana, and had been turned back by two immense black eunuchs armed with sabres.

We employed a Persian to teach us something of the language, not a difficult one, and we could soon talk enough for ordinary purposes. In the meantime Murad had had a bad attack of dysentery, and when he was convalescent, I was obliged with great regret, to part with him and send him back to Constantinople. We engaged a cook called Ali to help Mahomet, but we missed Murad sorely at first for he had been an excellent and faithful servant. At last we left the city of the Kibla-i-Alum (Cynosure of the Universe), as the Persians call the Shah, on November 15, intending to be back there again about the middle of January.

## CHAPTER VI

### ISPAHAN

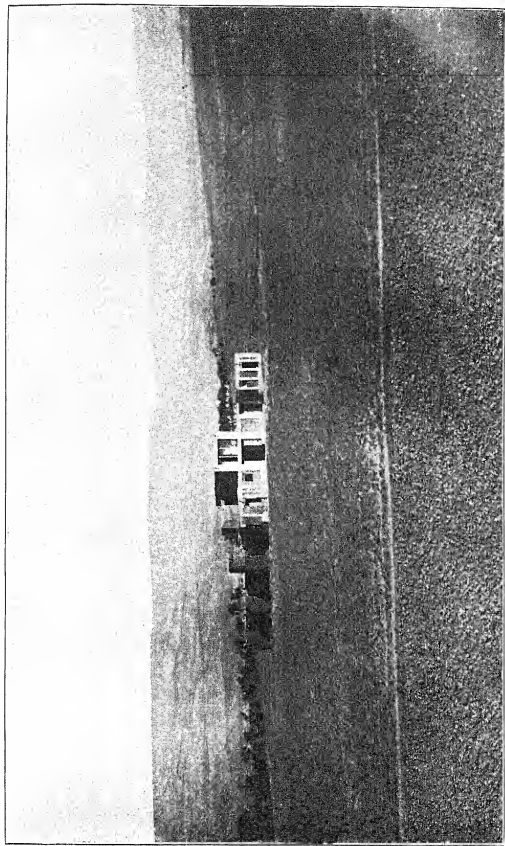
THE first part of our journey to the south was along a road which is the main line of communication from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian, so it is unnecessary to say much about it, but the cities which lie along it deserve mention. Subsequently the line of our route was briefly this: After Shiraz we were going to travel in a country inhabited by wandering Baktiati, Laur, and Arab tribes, in which no European had been for some years. From Shuster and Dizful we were going down the Karun, then to Busrah, the chief port of Turkish Arabia, and up the Tigris to Baghdad, across the Zagros Mountains to Khanikin, and through Kurdistan by Kermanshah and Hamadan, back to our starting point Teheran.

Cold was not to be expected before we got to Kurdistan, but we prepared for it there, by taking two heavy ulsters lined with sheepskin. Our arms were the same as hitherto, but the chances of attack except on the mountains are as poor as the chances of sport. The road to Shiraz lies across a monotonous



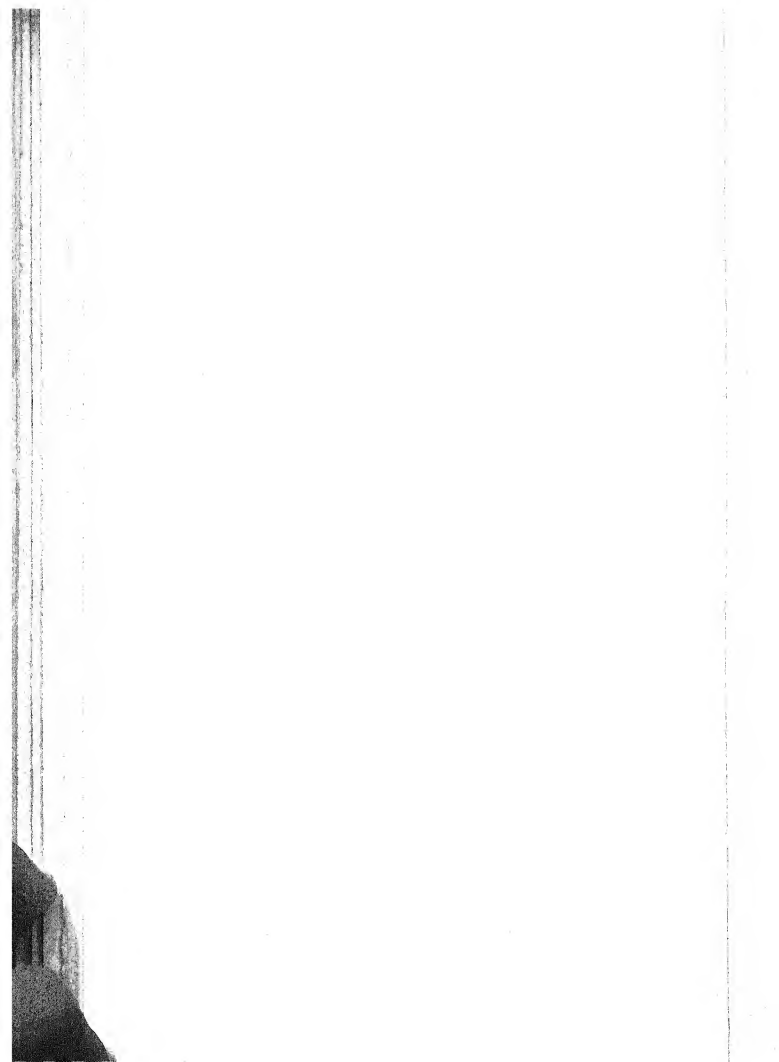
plain with no game beyond an occasional partridge and snipe. Only once in a gorge just beyond the ruins of Pasargadae we saw at once two pig, thirty gazelle, and a splendid golden-crested eagle.

We put up as a rule in the Chapper Khanehs on the road, which were in a very dilapidated condition. Once or twice we had to sleep in open stone courts. It took us seven days to cover the 270 miles to Ispahān as the horses supplied by the post were wretched. It is possible to drive the whole way from Teheran to Kum, 100 miles, but we found the carriage so uncomfortable and expensive that we sent it back after the first day and rode. Just outside Teheran we passed the mosque of Shah Abdul Azim where the Shah was assassinated five months later. Hard by are the ruins of Rhey, the ancient Rhages mentioned in the Book of Tobit, where Alexander marched in 330 B.C. on his way from Hamadan to the Caspian Gates. There are now only a few mounds and some half obliterated carvings on the rock to mark the city, and the remains are insignificant compared with those at Persepolis and those near Kermanshah. On the third day late at night we reached Kum, where we stayed a day. It is the holy city of Persia, although Meshed is more popular with pilgrims. The population is made up almost entirely of Seyids and Mollahs, two classes of great account in the land. The Seyids are the reputed descendants of Mahomet, and are distinguished in their dress by wearing blue turbans. They follow the ordinary professions but enjoy



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CHAPPER KIAUEH (POST HOUSE).



certain privileges and are looked upon as sacred. The Mollahs are the regular priests, and as a badge of office wear a large white turban. They exercise a powerful influence in Persia, for the most part anti-European. The reign of the late Shah, Nasr ed Din was occupied by a continual struggle between the court and the priests. The court headed by the Shah advocated modern views, imbibed from Europe; the Mollahs backed by the Valiahd, or Crown Prince, were strongly against any change. Kum is their headquarters, and they live in great numbers in the sacred colleges of which the place is largely composed. The saint who gives her name to the shrine which is the centre of worship, is Ma'asuma Fatima, not the daughter of Mahomet, but of Imam Riza, who flourished about 950, and is himself buried at Meshed the other holy city. Mr. Curzon amusingly remarks that he seemed to have a habit of scattering the bodies of his relations all over Persia! The chief glory of the shrine of the Immaculate Fatima at Kum is that it is "bast" or sanctuary. A criminal taking refuge in it cannot be arrested so long as he is there, and the Shah himself cannot violate this sanctuary. The only way to recapture the criminal is to bribe the Mollahs, who can prevent his getting food, and starve him out. This is one of the few basts left in Persia, the other recognised ones being the henna-dyed tails of the royal horses, a big cannon called the "Pearl" at Teheran, and the shrine at Meshed.

The mosque was built in the eighth century, but

was restored not long ago by Fath Ali Shah. It has a gilded dome and four marble minarets wonderfully enamelled in blue and green. Round the capitals are gold leaf inscriptions from the Koran, and the effect of this dazzling decoration in the sunlight is splendid. Most of the Shahs are buried here, but we of course could not get inside the sacred precincts. The inhabitants of Kum have a bad name for turbulence, and are much disliked by Persians at large, as are the people of Kashan, the next town. A Persian proverb says that "A dog of Kashan is better than a noble of Kum, albeit a dog is better than a man of Kashan." However the Kumites were pleasant enough to us, except the postmaster, who kept us waiting for our horses. When we did succeed in getting off we moved along pretty fast. On the road we met an English missionary and his wife going to Yezd. He was riding, but his wife and children were in a "taktaravan"—a long, closed litter, with projecting poles in front and behind, drawn by mules. The other litter used in Persia is called a *kejaveh*. Two of these are slung on either side of a horse, and the occupant sits cramped up in a little basket with a hood pulled over it.

We arrived at Kashan that evening. The place is famous for its silks, its scorpions, and the cowardice of its inhabitants. It is said that they are excused military service on that account. When Nadr Shah disbanded his army on his return from India, there is a story that 30,000 men of Kashan and Ispahan applied for an escort of a hundred

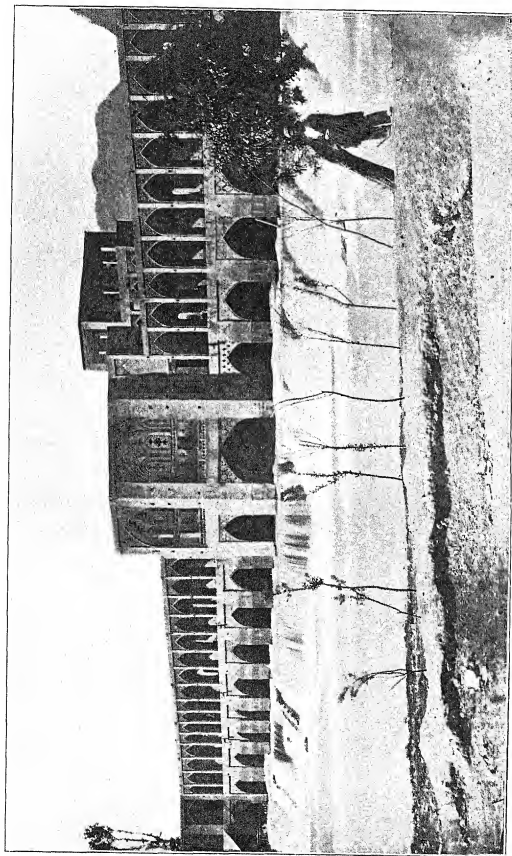
musketeers to see them safely home. While we were here an old man came into the courtyard of the Chapper Khaneh and asked us to take an omen out of Sadi, as it would bring us luck. The first thing it brought us was a drunken chapper boy. He was a little Persian, sodden and dazed with opium, and as it was his business to show the road and drive the led horses, we took seven hours to do twenty-five miles. At Kuhrud we saw some silver foxes among the poplars and olives, but could not get near them, and then we descended into the plain in torrents of rain, and had no adventure before arriving at Ispahan on November 14, where we were kindly entertained by the British Consul, Mr. Preese.

Ispahan is mentioned by Ptolemy as Aspadana. It was ravaged in the Middle Ages by both Jenghis Khan and Tamerlane, but it revived enough to become the capital of Persia in 1585. As the metropolis of the Sefavi dynasty, it is said to have had a million inhabitants, and to have rivalled London and Pekin in size. In 1722 the Afghans reduced it to ruins, and it never recovered its old importance. At the present time it is a very desolate place, and its population has dwindled to 60,000. The palace is the largest in Persia, and contains the famous hall of forty columns, decorated with some strange wall paintings. The great bridge which spans the Zender Rud, and connects Ispahan with Julfa, the Armenian city, was built in the sixteenth century by Ali Verdi Khan, one of Shah Abbas's

generals. It is 360 yards long, and has three separate stories, and an arched side walk running outside the parapet. In the Chahar Bagh, a long boulevard leading up to the bridge, planted with poplars, there is a royal "Medreseh," or sacred college, with silver doors, witnessing to the ancient magnificence of the town. "Ispahan nisf i Jehan" (Ispahan is half the world), says the proverb, a pathetic one nowadays.

Trade is still fairly active. Chintz making, indigo dyeing, the manufacture of copper and silver ware are all carried on. As a commercial city Ispahan ranks highest after Tabreez, and so before Teheran, although its population is much smaller. There is a great deal of life and movement in the bazars, which are crowded all day with camels, horses, donkeys, and people buying and selling. The hammering of the coppersmiths is heard on all sides, and in the dyeing bazar there are rows of cloths hung up dripping with indigo.

Next day we crossed the Zender Rud and visited Julfa, inhabited by some five or six thousand Armenians, the descendants of a colony founded there three hundred years ago by Shah Abbas. They have an archbishop, a cathedral and a school, and there are besides establishments of the Church Missionary Society, and the Bible Society, where the children can be educated. Until quite recently all the Europeans lived in Julfa, the bank and telegraph officials going across to their work in Ispahan every day, but on the foundation of a



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THE KAJAR BRIDGE AT ISPAHAN.





British Consulate a few years ago, Mr. Preese insisted on living in Ispahan, a wise resolve which has done much to soften Mohammedan prejudice and increase our prestige. There are very few shops in Julfa, and the chief object of interest is the old Cathedral of St. Gregory. He is not our St. Gregory, but another one of the same name—and the frescoes on the church walls deal with the diverse revolting tortures to which he was subjected. They—the pictures—were executed by Italian monks in the seventeenth century, and are fine though grotesque. The altar has a curtain as in the Greek Church, and the bishop sits in the apse. The service is conducted in ancient Armenian, which is not understood by the people. As a rule the priests are uneducated men, and the Catholic and Protestant missionaries devote their time to instructing and converting young Armenians to their own creeds. Mussulman converts are hardly ever made. One girl who “went over” while we were in Ispahan had to flee to the harem of the Prince to avoid being killed by her relatives. In Ispahan, as in many other parts of Persia, the Mohammedans have hitherto believed that all Firengi are like Armenians, and in consequence have looked on them with disfavour. The Armenians foster this idea by using our name on every possible occasion, and it is doubtful whether without this they would enjoy their present immunity from persecution in the Shah’s dominion. A Mussulman Mollah talking to an Armenian said :

"Are you not thankful that there are English and other Firengis who live in Persia and protect you? Do you not reverence them?"

"Not at all," answered the Armenian; "we are the holy people of all the Christians, and in the same way that you respect your Seyids, so do all Europeans respect and honour us."

The most interesting man in Ispahan is its Governor, the Zil e Sultan (shadow of the kingdom). Though older than the present Shah, he could not succeed to the throne because he was not the son of a royal princess. Years ago, being very able and strong-willed, he collected a body of nearly 40,000 troops at Ispahan, and drilled and armed them well. As he was rich and Governor of the provinces of Ispahan, Fars, Yezd, Baktiari, and Arabistan a fear arose that he was plotting for the throne on his father's death, and pressure was brought to bear on the Shah to deprive him of his offices. He was disgraced and for some time imprisoned in Teheran. Latterly he has been gradually winning back his power, and his loyal conduct at the time of his father's murder in April, 1896, has done much to establish confidence in him. He is one of the strongest governors in the country, and although reported to be severe, has succeeded in carrying out a few local reforms. For one thing he has almost entirely put down highway robbery.

At the Shah's death, which occurred just after we reached Bokhara, the Zil e Sultan repressed with a strong hand an insurrection, of the kind which always

follows a great political change in Persia, and at once telegraphed his submission and homage to his brother. He was then confirmed in all his offices, while the third brother, who was suspected of being lukewarm in his acknowledgment of the new sovereign, was disgraced.

## CHAPTER VII

### PERSEPOLIS AND SHIRAZ

THE next town we came to on our way to Shiraz was Kumes Shah, a small place with mud battlements, blue domes, and white pigeon towers, where the dung is collected for the purpose of manuring the melon beds. The bright colouring of this little city was a welcome relief from the bare brown plain through which we had been riding. After passing Yezdikast, a town built on a rock, we came to Abadeh. There the telegraph clerk kindly entertained us; and the Governor of the town, by name Mustashah Nizam, invited us to a "hunt" he was giving in honour of his son, a boy of ten, who bore the rank, or, at any rate, wore the uniform of a colonel. We started about eight in the morning, riding our host's horses, and met him with his son, his deputy, and his chaplain, just outside the town. An escort of twenty-five horsemen rode with the party. The pace was slow, and the Governor stopped every now and again to smoke his silver "kalian." We were told that beaters had been sent into the mountains the day before to ring all

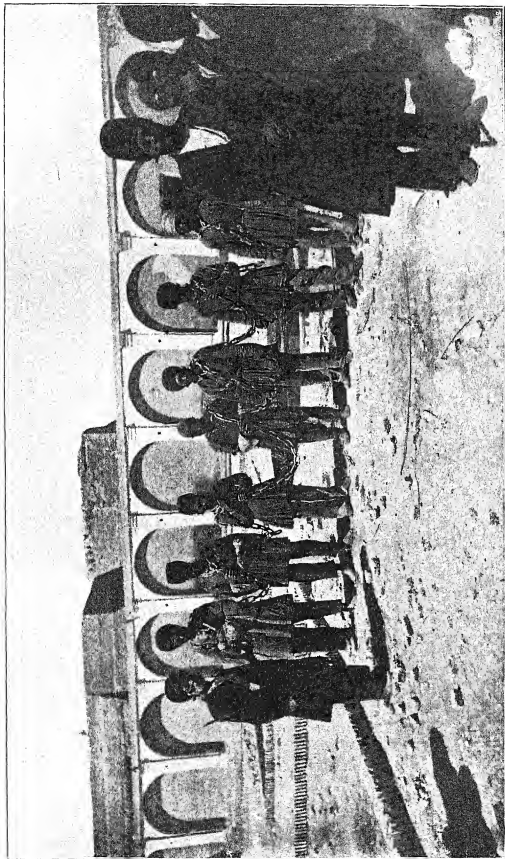
the game, and that we should have excellent sport, but another report said that the beaters were incompetent, and as the Governor was unpopular with the country side, the villagers would not help more than they were obliged. However, as far as we could judge, he was a pleasant, good-tempered person, and his son was an amusing little boy. He carried a Martini, of which luckily he could not yet pull the trigger, so we were safe. Nevertheless, he told us that he had already killed 10,000 gazelle. During the ride the best men in the escort gave an exhibition of their skill. Riding in front at full gallop, they flung down a stick on one side of their horses, and caught it as it rebounded on the other. Others shot small birds with their rifles while a third party went through a sham fight, making their horses charge, and cutting at each other's heads with their swords. They afterwards took to firing their rifles into the air, and then throwing them up and catching them. As all the cartridges were ball, we took a vivid interest in the manoeuvres.

At last we got well into the hills, and were posted high up among the rocks; but no game appeared, and the only bag after two hours was an eagle. The Governor did not seem to mind the blank morning much, and led the way down to the valley, where we found luncheon spread on red carpets. There were no spoons or forks, so we ate the rice and pilaf, which the Governor piled up on our plates, with our hands. Luncheon

over, we started for home, not much impressed by the Persian idea of a hunt.

On the way we saw the graves of 200 Babis, who had been massacred at Abadeh at the time of the rebellion in 1854. The heresy was not rooted out, for to-day nearly every one in the town is a Babi. As we passed through the gates we noticed two pillars, and were told that the late Governor had walled up two brigands in them alive. This inhuman method of execution was very common in Persia at one time, and only the other day five prisoners at Shiraz were buried alive in plaster of Paris.

Seventy miles from Abadeh brought us to the plain of Pasargadæ, on which there are the ruins of an ancient city, and the tomb of Cyrus. Cyrus built the city on the site of his great victory over Astyages the Mede, and it subsequently became one of the royal cities of the Achæmenian dynasty, whose kings were crowned here. Alexander the Great visited it on his return from India in 324 B.C., and found the tomb rifled of its treasures. The ruins cannot compare with those at Persepolis, but they are interesting enough. There is a half ruined wall, a square arch about thirty feet high, a big pillar with a recess like a sentry-box in it, and a cuneiform inscription cut above. On a mound not far off there is a tall slender column, nearly twenty-five feet high. But the sights of the place are the pillar and tomb of Cyrus. The pillar lies away from the road, and is eleven feet high.



PRISON AT TAHUR.

[To face page 136.]





It is of hewn stone and is engraved with a picture of a four-winged and crowned king, supposed to be the only authentic portrait of Cyrus in existence. The carving is very fine, only the features are now almost completely worn away. The inscription is cut in triplicate cuneiform of Persian Susian, and Assyrian, and reads :

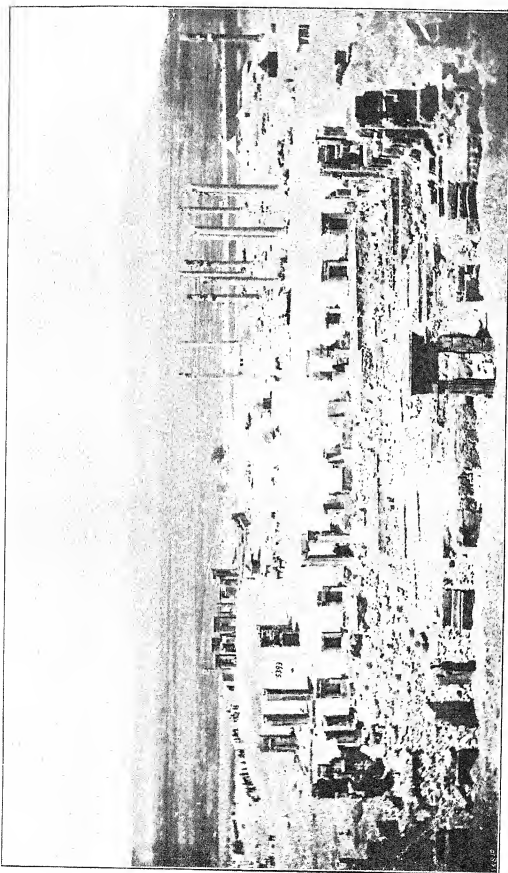
I am Cyrus, the King, the Achæmenian.

The tomb, which is about a quarter of a mile from the pillar, surrounded by a graveyard and a small hamlet, is now used as a mosque. It is a square building of polished marble raised on five gigantic steps, and is about forty feet high. I climbed up to see the inside, which consists of a chamber about ten feet by eight feet. The walls are covered with inscriptions in Arabic, and hung with dirty bits of rag left as offerings by the Persians, who call the place *Madr-i-Suleman*.

At five o'clock we pursued our journey through a rocky defile called the *Sangbur*. Along the face of the rock, about sixty feet above the stream of the *Polwar River*, a passage is cut. It is about 200 yards long, and three feet broad. The outer edge is a rock balustrade, beyond which there is a steep precipice. It is a marvellous piece of work, and shows what a pitch of engineering skill the Persians had reached under Cyrus and Darius. The next day the caravan went on before us to *Pusa*, a village close to the ruins of *Persepolis*, and *Labouchere* and I, following it, managed to lose

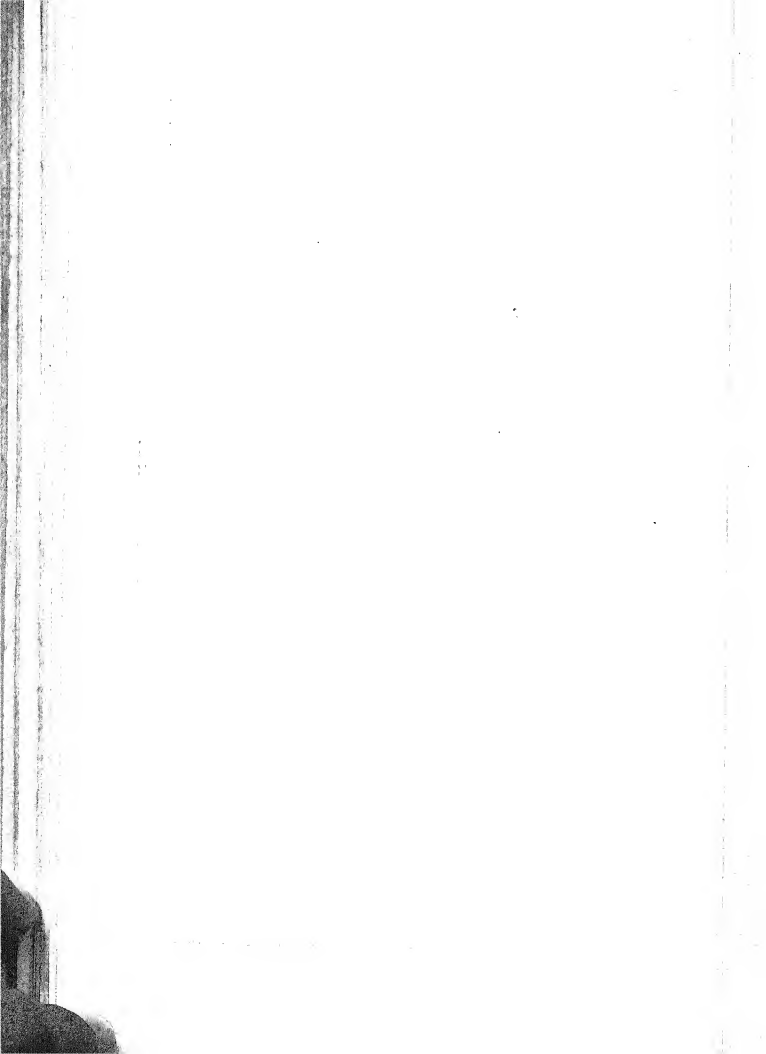
our way, and at eight o'clock in the evening found ourselves high up in the mountains under the great rock tombs of the kings. There was a wild wind blowing across the plain beneath, and the grim figures hewn in the rock at the head of the dark mouths of the tombs had a ghastly effect in the darkness. The track we were on suddenly ended, so we left it and struck across the plain. After an hour's wandering we came upon an Arab encampment, and succeeded in getting two of the men to guide us to the Chapper Khaneh. On our way across country we stumbled on the caravan, and so reached the miserable little post-house long after midnight. In the morning we rode off to Persepolis, and certainly the toil of a visit to Persia is amply repaid by the spectacle of the relics of the palace that Cyrus built and Alexander burnt.

Imagine an immense platform about fifty feet high and with a frontage of a quarter of a mile, built entirely of huge blocks of hewn stone. The two flights of stone steps which lead up to this *terreplein* from the ground are so broad and shallow that it is easy to ride down them. On the platform are seven distinct buildings, all in a fair state of preservation. The roofs have gone, and some parts of the walls have fallen in, but the pillars and porticos remain standing, and some of the carvings are as fresh and clear as if the chisel had been used on them but yesterday. Fourteen colossal columns, each nearly eighty feet high, represent the Hall of Xerxes.



RUINS OF PERSEPOLIS.

[To face p. 138.]



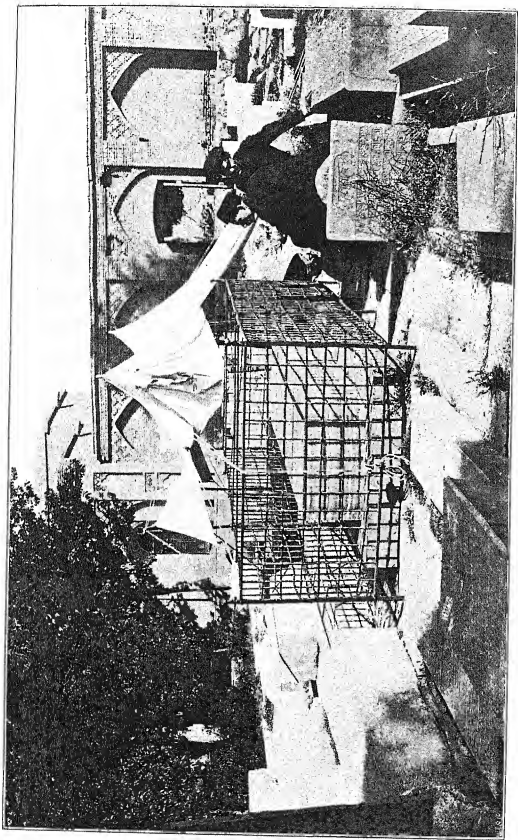
Then there is the Porch of Xerxes, about sixty feet high, flanked by two winged bulls frowning sullenly at the plain below. The Palace of Darius is full of spirited sculptures of hunting scenes and chariot races, interspersed with portraits of the different kings surrounded by attendants. The hall of the Hundred Columns was desolated by an earthquake, and is now only a chaos of fallen shafts, architraves, pillars, and cornices, but it is possible to conjure up a picture of what it must have been in its glory. Everywhere is carved the peculiar winged symbol which represents the god Ormuzd, the divine principle of life, and all round are the cuneiform inscriptions which puzzled antiquaries for so long, and were eventually deciphered by Rawlinson.

Persepolis was the state palace of the Achæmenian kings, and here were kept the royal treasure and the altars. The kings' summer residence was at fire Ecbatana, and in the winter they lived at Susa. But on great occasions the court always went to Persepolis. And although much of it was destroyed by Alexander, the altars and treasure remained here up to the overthrow of the Magian faith and the final adoption of Islam in 651 A.D.

We slept that night in a queer old town called Zerghun, where our caravanserai was within an ace of being burnt down; and the next day we arrived at Shiraz. This city is supposed by all Persians to be a sort of terrestrial paradise. There are endless proverbs in its praise. "See Shiraz and die." "When Shiraz was Shiraz Cairo was one of its suburbs." Its

women are adored as the houris of the earth. "If my beloved of Shiraz gains my heart, by the black mole on her cheek I will give away the kingdoms of Samarkand and Bokhara." Persians are never tired of singing the courtesy of its inhabitants, the excellence of its wine, the purity of its water, the beauty of its scenery, the fame of its poets, and the delights of life there. A casual observer might think the scenery ordinary, the water bad, the women no more beautiful and the men no more polite than the ordinary Persians. On the other hand, the wine is not over-praised, nor are the poets Hafiz and Sadi. But the buildings are in ruins, and the smell in the streets is exceptionally bad even when judged by an eastern standard. The real charm of the place is its verdure, which is enchanting after the barren plain which lies round it.

Our stay at Shiraz was made extremely pleasant by the hospitality of the British representative, the Nawab Hyder Ali Khan, a rich prince of Indian extraction. He has a beautiful house with an orange tree garden and a private hammam. The day after our arrival we were taken to see the Rukn-ed-Dowleh, a brother of the late Shah's and Governor of Shiraz and the province of Fars. We rode up to the palace gates where we were received by the farrashes and taken into a big room overlooking a stone court planted with trees. We found the prince sitting alone over coffee. He asked whether we knew Bambai as he called it, and laid stress on the necessity of keeping the English traffic to Shiraz



THE TOMB OF HAFIZ AT SHIRAZ.

[To face p. 140.]





and not letting it go direct from Shuster to Ispahan. This is the great fear of Shiraz merchants, for the road from their city to Bushire on the coast is a bad one, and a railway is impracticable, because of the "kotals" or mountain ladders. They naturally dislike the idea of an easier route being adopted from the Karun to Ispahan which would damage their trade. As things are, Shiraz enjoys prosperity, as the prince kept on assuring us. He promised us an escort from his own body-guard to facilitate our journey across Lauristan, and generally did his best for us.

The next day we visited the tombs of Sadi and Hafiz, as every one must do, when they visit Shiraz for the first time. Hafiz was born in 1310 and was a contemporary of Dante's. His tomb lies outside the town in a cemetery and is surrounded by a brass railing. We found an old Seyid sitting there under a little tent mumbling prayers, and after giving him something we went on to Sadi's tomb which is more interesting. His chief work was the *Gulistan* or *Rose Garden*, and he is buried in a shrine planted round with his favourite flower. They showed us a very ancient copy of his works beautifully illuminated and adorned with old Persian pictures, among which was one of ladies playing polo. The only other building of interest in Shiraz is the *Garden of the Throne*, a once lovely terraced pavilion, but now in a ruined condition. Some of the mediæval legends about Shiraz are rather interesting. Herbert says of it :

Here art magic was first hatched. Here Nimrod for some time lived. Here Cyrus, the most excellent of all heathen princes, was born, and here all but his head, which was sent to Pisigard, was entombed. Here the great Macedonian glutted his avarice and his Bacchism. Here the first Sibylla sang our Saviour's incarnation. Hence the Magi are thought to have set out towards Bethlehem, and here a series of two hundred kings have swayed their sceptres.

Shiraz has been identified by some with the Achæmenian Cyropolis, but there is not much ground for it. The Arab city was founded in 694, and as it was subsequently devastated by both Jenghis and Tamerlane, there is very little of it left.

With the Nawab's help we engaged a caravan and a chavadar willing to undertake the long and almost unknown journey to Shuster, and on December 14 we started.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SHIRAZ TO SHUSTER

THE only town of any size which lay on our road to Shuster was Behbahan on the border of the province of Fars, about twenty-five miles from the sea. As it was about half way we decided when we left Shiraz that we would stay one day there for Christmas. Both at Teheran and at Shiraz we had been told that the road was very unsafe, and Mr. Preese at Ispahan had advised us to go by sea from Bushire to Busrah, as he thought the famine then existing in Fars would make the road even more than usually difficult for us. Consequently, we felt as we rode through what is really a wild mountainous country that we should only have ourselves to blame if any misfortune occurred. Still we were unwilling to be persuaded against going through Lauristan, because it was unknown to Europeans, and also because we wanted to see the few remaining warlike tribes left in Persia, for the Baktiari and Laurs compare favourably with many others in courage and hardihood. Cyrus's maxim, "Ride, shoot and speak the truth," is, so far as the first two things in it

are concerned, practised faithfully in Lauristan, where the men are excellent shots and horsemen. They live a patriarchal life in the mountains, and are intensely loyal to the chiefs of their clan.

During our journey we came across Shuls, Kohgelus, Felli and Mamasenni Laurs, and Pusht-i-Kuh Baktiari, all tribes inhabiting parts of Fars and Arabistan, as well as Lauristan. Beyond Behbahan we got into the country of the Kab Arabs, Shiahs by adoption, who have migrated from the upper deserts of Arabia. Besides all these there are the Kashkais, a tribe of purely Turkish origin, said to have been brought from Kashgar by Jenghis or Tamerlane.

The caravan, collected with great difficulty, consisted of five pack horses on which sat the servants and a tall ruffianly looking chavadar who was their owner, two saddle horses for ourselves, and two chargers carrying the escort the Prince has given us. One of these was Hassan Khan, and the other Abdul Bey. Hassan Khan never did anything but admire his black silk trousers, and smoke a gorgeous kalia, but Abdul Bey was more useful, and his enormous acquaintance on the road often stood us in good stead. He was a good shot too, and brought down partidges with a bullet in a marvellous way.

Most of the villages were fortified. Goyum, the best example we saw, resembled an enormous caravanserai. Everything was enclosed in four stone walls, and the single gate was shut at night with clamped doors, and protected still further

by a drawbridge. Inside, men, women, cattle, horses and chickens were all herded together in a very insanitary fashion, but they seemed quite happy.

At Sangur we slept in a cowshed which was cleaned out on purpose, and were an object of great interest to the inhabitants, who had never seen a Firengi before in their lives. In the morning the whole village turned out to see us start. Of the hundred and twenty present, twenty at least were quite naked, and the remainder only scantily clothed. The women were unveiled and very plain. This is not wonderful considering that they marry at twelve, and have lived their lives before they are twenty-five.

We crossed six rivers that day, and in the evening pitched our tent in a thickly wooded valley. For days after this we never saw a village, although we passed ruined caravanserais and broken bridges built of stone. Nothing is ever repaired in Persia. The people prefer to run up stucco houses and inns, pilfering the material they want from some fine old caravanserai of Shah Abbas's time, which would be good for another three hundred years. The scenery we passed through was beautiful. Above rolling heights and below narrow wooded valleys with rushing streams. The trees were chiefly poplar, willow, and holm oak. On December 19 we arrived at Telespia, where there is a castle on a hill. The huts in the village at its foot are all of baked mud, wattled with straw, and as they

looked more than commonly dirty inside we camped out, and in the evening got some plover and snipe. Our chavadar spent half the next day in looking for a pack saddle he declared he had lost in the village, and so we did not get the horses out until late. In consequence we lost our way in the dark on a kotal or mountain ladder we had to descend, and when we reached Basht the caravan was not there. We had the greatest difficulty in getting into the place at all. The people were expecting brigands and took us for a decoy, so they turned out with their rifles. It was a very dark night, the dogs were barking furiously and the most noisome smells were coming up from the river. The conversation between Abdul Bey and the townsmen was rather amusing, so I give as much as I can remember of it.

Abdul Bey (knocking at the gate): "Ho! brother, Ali Khan, great one, how is it? Come open, lord, Abdul Bey from Shiraz calls you."

Voice from within: "I know you not; no one is here; begone!"

Abdul Bey: "Listen excellency. Two Franks, friends and great ones, are here travelling to Behbahan. Let the Governor have news."

Voice from within: "I hear not, speak again."  
(Aside to a friend: "Quick, bastard, bring a gun. May your father burn!")

Abdul Bey: "Two Franks, peaceful travellers, desire a room for the night. It is I, Abdul Bey, your friend from Shiraz who speaks."

Pause, and a great noise and bustle inside. Then the door opens suddenly, and eleven men emerge all armed with muzzle loaders at full cock.

Then the same voice which had spoken from within is heard speaking with a mixture of suspicion and effusion :

" Ah ! my preserver, Abdul Bey, I heard you not ; I did not understand. Much notice be to you."

They embrace. The ten remaining men look at us and our rifles with growing respect.

Abdul Bey : " Let there be found a lodging place for the two Firengis."

The Voice (with a fresh access of mistrust) : " Lodging place there is none. Here we have no room. Let their excellencies proceed ; there is a clean and large village three farsakhs from hence."

(There was no village nearer than twenty-five miles.)

The Voice now addresses Mahomet, and seeing that he is our servant endeavours to suborn him :

" O pilgrim, peace be unto you, from whence art you ? " (Aside, " Certainly a king's son.")

Mahomet : " Peace be to you ! From Shiraz I have come."

The Voice : " A miracle ; my fathers he is from Shiraz. Dismount, pilgrim, and look. There is no room."

Mahomet dismounts, and is led off through the darkness. A light appears, and the sound of a kalia being smoked is distinctly heard.



First Firengi: "Mahomet, be quick. Is there a room?"

Mahomet (from the darkness): "My Lord, no room is found."

First Firengi (in desperation, summoning up his broken Persian for an attack on the Governor): "Ho, bastards, may your fathers burn! Assuredly when I come to my friend the Governor-General, I will say to him, 'In the town of Basht there is no hospitality. The Governor there is dog-fathered.'"

A pause. The Governor's head disappears precipitately from the window above the gate. The travellers ride to the place where we had seen the light, and find an open door with four tall men standing by it, evidently wavering. Four ancient silver coins are produced, and there is an instant change of feeling.

The four tall men in unison: "By the leave of God, command, step forward, enter! The house is prepared. Let their excellencies carry themselves inside. O pilgrim, Lord Mahomet, bring hither the horses."

It was annoying at the time but funny afterwards, and soon after we were installed, part of the caravan came in, so we were comparatively happy. The Hakim sent us a very good dinner, but when we called on him in the morning to thank him, we were told that he had gone out to hunt the brigands, and hoped we should speak well of him to the Governor-General.

Our next halting place was Dogumbezan, built

of reed huts with a dirty caravanserai half in ruins. Here we were met with the information that the Governor and all his soldiers had gone out to fight robbers. We were further told that if we stayed the night we could have an escort in the morning, but that if we went on we should be caught and pillaged. So, very foolishly, we stopped, and of course saw nothing of either escort or brigands. However, the people were interesting, and we were able to replenish our stores.

On Christmas Eve after struggling across a muddy plain we reached Behbahan, and were put up by the Governor, Muntasser el Mulk, in the Kolah Firengi pavilion. "Kolah firengi" means European hat. The pavilion did not resemble any hat that we knew of, but perhaps its name made the Governor think that it was an appropriate residence for us. It stood in a garden of palm and orange trees, and was an ideal place to stay in at that time of year. The Governor sent us in all our meals, and his attendant priest used to come and drink our whisky, by way of making things fair.

Christmas Day we spent hawking with the Governor, who was a most attractive Persian nobleman. He was courteous and hospitable, well educated, and not by any means bigoted about foreigners or religion. His town was clean and prosperous, and although his method of administering justice was eccentric, he was neither tyrannical nor cruel. The hawking procession was an inspiring

sight. About forty cavalry turned out, all dressed alike for a wonder, and with carbines of the same pattern. The Governor's horses were magnificent Arabs; his own saddle-cloth blazed with gold embroidery, and the kalian carried behind him shone with jewels. Red footmen ran in front of him with wands in their hands. We rode in this state about two miles out of the town, where we lunched in a marquee, and then the hawks were unhooded by their keepers and flown at various birds. They were splendid birds, and the best of them struck two black partridges and a hare, but it was more of a spectacle than sport.

On the way home we rode by acres of narcissus, and the cavalry gave examples of its skill. In the evening we were entertained by singing and dancing, accompanied by monotonous music. The priest and the Deputy-Governor sat with us for two hours drinking tea, wine, whisky, and coffee, and eating pistachio nuts and sugar cakes.

The populace in Behbeban had evidently no idea that we were infidels, for they all greeted us with "Salam Aleykum," a salutation reserved for true believers, and took us into the mosques, an unheard-of privilege for a heretic in Persia.

The morning we were going to leave, our chavadar, who had given us every kind of trouble on the road, said he must have more money. The agreement had been that he should receive half his hire at Shiraz and the other half when we arrived at Shuster, so we refused to give him any more until

he had fulfilled his agreement, and we were in Shuster. Then he said he would not come at all, so we appealed to the Governor. We had only asked him to reprimand the man so that we should have no more trouble with him, but the Governor saw the affair in a different light, and had him whipped. Consequently we were relieved of him for the rest of the journey, as he provided a deputy to look after his caravan.

We had a new escort of four smart Laurs, as the Governor said the country was in a disturbed state. The first part of our way lay over a plain on which there were several Arab encampments. The Kab Arabs live in a patriarchal style, and have immense herds of buffalo, sheep, and goats, which graze on the pastures of the plains, which run down to the river Karun and the sea. This part of the country is in the province of Arabistan, and was then governed by the Nizam es Sultaneh at Shuster. He had also got Lauristan and the Baktiari under his rule, and was consequently one of the greatest powers in Persia.

We rode into Shuster on New Year's Eve, having taken seventeen days, including stoppages, to cover the 354 miles from Shiraz.

## CHAPTER IX

### SHUSTER AND DIZFUL

THE name Shuster is said to be derived from the ancient Persian word signifying "pleasant," and the city, although it is not so extravagantly praised as Shiraz, is very fine. It shares with Astrabad the distinction of being the only town in Persia built of stone. A castle overhangs the river, and there is a story of Valerian having been imprisoned in it after the Roman defeat at Edessa. It is said that he directed the building of the famous bridge and dam at Shuster during his imprisonment. But it is more probable that Varanes, a Roman engineer, devised them. Only twenty-eight of the original forty arches of the bridge now remain standing, and they have been so constantly repaired that there is little of the original surface left. Below this massive structure flows the Karun, a swift current in a broad bed, and in spring time dangerously swollen by floods. It was a great storm and flood some ten years ago that caused the fissure in the bridge, which exists at the present time. It is of course the Governor's business to keep it in

repair out of the revenues of the province, but as this might mean calling in the services of engineers from Europe, and incurring a great expense, the bridge is likely to remain in its present state for some time to come. A ferry inadequately supplies the deficiency.

The other achievement of Varanes—the dam—was intended to turn the waters of the Ab-i-Gerger into the Ab-i-Shuteit, the two branches of the Karun which encircle the town. The building was never finished, and there is now very little water in either channel. Owing to the constant silting up of the beds, the Ab-i-Gerger does not become navigable for at least seven miles. We crossed this branch of the river when we entered Shuster by a small but good stone bridge. Under it the water falls in a cascade, and is used for working some corn mills which lie close by. At the end of the bridge we went under a massive archway into a dirty little street hemmed in on either side by high stone houses, and then, turning sharply to the right, mounted the hill to the castle. As we clattered over the drawbridge the Deputy-Governor came out and told us that the Governor-General was away in camp at Dizful, about thirty miles off, and that he hoped we should go out there and visit him. In the meantime the castle was at our service, and here we stayed for two days. We had no lack of guides, for a Persian merchant, who had been in Bombay and spoke excellent English, placed himself at our disposal, and the Armenian secretary

of Messrs. Lynch's representative also did his best for us.

The bazars in Shuster are very ragged, consisting for the most part of booths pitched round the squares which here take the place of streets. The chief industries are carpets and iron. But the importance of the place is as a trading centre. Several companies export grain, sesame and indigo.

The climate is very hot in summer, and every one spends the day in the "serdabs," spacious cellars sunk under the houses at a depth of sixty feet, and ventilated by a broad shaft. In the winter these serdabs are used as store-rooms. The inhabitants of Shuster are extremely fanatical, and all wear the blue turban, which is the outward sign of descent from Mahomet. They are surly and arrogant, and noted for their hatred of Firengis. We had a taste of their prejudices when they refused to wash our dirty linen.

If a railway is ever built from Shuster to Kum or Ispahan its importance will be enormously increased, and from its position at the head of the Karun it will oust Shiraz from its higher rank as a mart. Also it must not be forgotten that Shuster is the capital of Arabistan, by far the most fertile province of Persia, and one that if properly cultivated might become a granary of the world.

It was our intention to go down the Karun in a steamer, but hearing that there would not be one starting for four or five days, we decided to make an expedition to Dizful to see the Governor and the

ruins of Susa, which are very rarely visited. It took us three hours to cross the river, whereas if the bridge had been in repair it would have taken three minutes. We stayed that night at a caravanserai at Govnak, and the next morning some farrashes of the Nizam's met us and escorted us to his tents, which were pitched just outside the town of Dizful. On our way we were taken into the indigo caves where the indigo was being pressed into oblong cakes. It was not an interesting process to watch, and smells, and swarms of flies were exceptionally rife. As soon as we were installed in a tent at the Nizam's encampment, he sent us a black lamb accompanied by an invitation to go and see him. We found him sitting in a small garden with a pavilion. He is a little wizened man of about sixty, and is said to have begun life as a servant in the Grand Vizier's harem. Like many other Persians he has raised himself by his own efforts to positions of great power, alternating with periods of disgrace. He has twice been Governor of Arabistan, but is now in the disgrace stage again. The Governor of Dizful, a Shahzadeh called Muntasser ed Dowleh, and the Hereditary Prince of the Baktiari were with him when we came into the garden. The latter was kept by the Nizam as a hostage for the good behaviour of the tribes. We were promised an escort to accompany us to the Susa ruins the next day, a necessary precaution, as the country is infested by wandering Arabs who hate Europeans visiting their ruins, believing that they come to



carry off the gold which legend says is buried there.

Susa or Shush, as it is called by the Persians, marks the site of three distinct cities. The first and earliest of these was the capital of the Elamite kingdom. It was called Shushinak, and one of its kings was Chedorlaomor, about 2000 B.C. This city was laid waste by Assurbanipal, King of Assyria, in 645 B.C. In 505 B.C. it was rebuilt by Darius the son of Hystaspes (cf. Pliny, "*Vetus regia Persarum Dario Hystaspis filio condita*"). This palace was destroyed by fire, and another was erected by Artaxerxes II. in 400 B.C., and it was in this one, "at Shushan in the Palace," that Daniel saw the vision of the ram. Here also Esther was beloved by Ahasuerus, now identified with Artaxerxes, and here was situate the great winter residence of the Achæmenian kings. Alexander destroyed Shushan in 333 B.C., finding in its vaults treasure incalculable. Finally the city was rebuilt in 250 A.D. by Sapor the Second, and flourished for some time as the capital of the Sassanian monarchs. But with the decay of the dynasty the city fell into ruins, and nothing now remains of "what was once so stately and so spacious" but a long mound surrounded by hillocks, which is supposed to have been the citadel. Close by flows the river Shauvi, probably the Ulai of Daniel, which ran through the market-place. The Kerkhah or Khoaspes on the west and the Khorates on the east bordered the walls, so the diameter of the city must have been over two miles. To the

south lie flat, green plains which may have been the royal deer park where young Cyrus hunted. We climbed up the mound and found fragments of brick and pottery, beautifully coloured, but these, I expect, were only of the Sassanian epoch. The rarer treasures of the older cities lie deeper down. The traces of Dieulafoy's excavations are plainly visible. His chief finds, the friezes of the archers and the lions are now in the Louvre, and are the finest examples of Babylonian enamelling on brick that are known.

Near the mound is the reputed tomb of Daniel, an old square mamzadeh built of stone, long ago rifled and allowed to fall into decay. On the river bank is the new and gaudy shrine put up to the saint by the modern faithful.

The next day a terrific thunderstorm prevented a lion hunt we had contemplated, and the whole face of the country was changed by torrents of rain. We had great difficulty in making our way back to Dizful across the swamp. In the morning we returned to Shuster, and found the Karun very much swollen and rushing past at a great pace. We were glad to find ourselves in the castle again, where at least everything was dry. From the window we watched a herd of buffalo crossing the river. The leader plunged in slowly and heavily, and was carried down stream very rapidly, and the others followed in succession. Finally came the herdsman hanging on to the tail of the last buffalo, where he

acted as rudder, and shouted directions to the leader.

We stayed one more day, till January 9, in Shuster, as we had to hire some horses to take us to Ahwaz, where we had settled to take Lynch's steamer for Busrah.

## CHAPTER X

### DOWN THE KARUN

THE Karun is the only navigable river in Persia. It rises in the mountains west of Ispahan and emerging from the Baktiari hills north of Shuster, divides there into the two branches of the Gerger and the Shuteit. These streams reunite at Bund-ikir fifty miles lower down. Twenty miles further on are the rapids of Ahwaz, which divide the upper and lower rivers. From here its course is very winding to Mohammerah, where it flows into the Shat-el-Arab, and so into the Persian Gulf. The distance from Shuster to Mohammerah by water is 210 miles, whereas by road it is only 130, the difference being due to the curves in the Karun. The rate of the current sometimes reaches eight knots, and it rises with a flush to nineteen feet. Ships a hundred feet long, drawing three feet of water, can always get as far as Ahwaz, where the rapids make transshipment necessary. Several suggestions have been made for getting rid of the rocks which form the rapids, but perhaps the best plan would be to make a short canal with two locks. If this were done, the river

would be navigable from the sea to Shuster ; and, as the distance from Shuster to Teheran is only 500 miles as compared with 800 from the present port Bushire, it is hardly necessary to point out the difference Shuster's transformation would make to Persian trade. The journey from Bushire is difficult, and transport is almost entirely by camels, but a good carriage road could be made from Shuster to Kum at a cost of £8000. It is surprising that the thing has not been done—or, rather, it would be surprising in any other country but Persia, where people are shy of investing capital in any enterprise.

The Karun is the ancient Pasitigris, up which Nearchus sailed to join Alexander, and which Alexander crossed at Ahwaz by a bridge of boats on his march from Susa to Persepolis. Ahwaz, or Aginis, as it was called, was then a most populous place, and there is a legend that a man could walk on the house-tops from there to Shuster. At the present time it is merely a depôt of Lynch's and the Nasir Company, the latter a Persian undertaking which disputes with Lynch the supremacy of the Karun. There are many stone and brick ruins all round, and the remains of a canal bed into which the river water was turned for irrigating purposes. We arrived there on the second day after leaving Shuster, as we lost our caravan, as usual, the first night, and wandered about for hours on the bank of the river. We were welcomed at Ahwaz by Messrs. Lynch's agents.

On the 14th of January we embarked on the *Mal*

*Amir* for Busrah. The river is lined with small Arab villages inhabited by the Bari and Idris clans, branches of the great Kab tribe. We only halted for any length of time at Mohammerah, celebrated for the number of Sabians among its inhabitants. These remarkable people are also to be found at Dizful, at Busrah, and Amarah on the Tigris. Their religion obliges them to live near running water, and they call themselves "Mandayi," or possessors of the living word. One of their peculiarities is to have two names: one their ordinary or everyday name, and the other religious, and only used among themselves. Their language is a Semitic one, akin to Hebrew and Aramaic, and in it is written their holy book, the Sidra Raba. They live very secretly, never attempting to proselytise, and their numbers do not exceed 4000. The men are skilful workers in gold and silver, and make beautiful inlaid boxes, which are very difficult to buy, as the Sabians dislike selling to strangers. As far as can be ascertained, their religion is a worship of St. John the Baptist, from whom they profess to be descended. Baptism is a great feature in their ceremonial, and is constantly administered at weddings and funerals, and on all feast days. This is the reason of their always choosing to live on the banks of a river. It is doubtful whether they are connected with the Sabæans, but certainly the Pole Star enters into their worship. The reticence they preserve about themselves is very extraordinary, and the great part of their tenets is still obscure. They are devout

and upright men, and have lately begun to look on the English with much respect, because our consuls have protected them from the persecution of the Turks in Baghdad and Busrah.

I got hold of a small manuscript containing a *précis* of the Sidra Raba, or Book of Order, which purports to be a complete history of the world, written by God and given by him to the first man. The world exists for four periods of a hundred thousand years each. At the end of the first period it was destroyed by fire, at the end of the second by the sword, and at the end of the third by the flood. We are now in the fourth period, of which about sixty thousand years have already passed, and at the end of this term the world will be destroyed by wind. Of the immediate future the book says that Islam will continue for seventy years, and at the end of that time Christianity will become supreme, and will remain so for 400 years, during which time all creeds will be tolerated. Anti-Christ will then appear in Egypt, and the Messiah will rise up in Russia. The last two pages of the manuscript are said to be missing, so what was to happen after the coming of the Messiah is unknown.

The Sabians are probably a very early form of the Christian Church, for they have far more points in common with it than with Islam, and they hate the Mohammedans. The few words of their language I heard were very like Arabic—God is Oloho (Arabic, Allah); Jesus, Ichu (Arabic, Issu).

The banks of the river below Mohammerah were covered with palm trees and date groves, and as we drew near our goal we saw a crowd of caiques and feluccas on the estuary. We ran into Busrah about three o'clock that day, and were put up at the British consulate.





PART III

*TURKISH ARABIA*



## CHAPTER I

### BUSRAH AND THE TIGRIS

THE stretch of country on which we were now entering is called Irak Arabi, and consists of the two pashalics of Busrah and Baghdad. It is a long narrow strip, not more than 200 miles broad at any point, and nearly 400 miles long. The Arabian or desert frontier runs parallel with the Euphrates, and is about thirty miles south-west of it. Persia lies on the east, and the northern end is bounded by the villayets of Mosul and Zor. The various names which these provinces have borne from time to time are worth enumerating. Irak Arabi was in ancient times called Shumir, the Shinar of the Bible; then it became Chaldæa or Babylonia, and, under the Romans, Mesopotamia. Its capitals have been in succession, Babylon, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, and Baghdad. Fars was the original Persia, the native country of the Achæmenians. Its capitals were Persepolis and Shiraz. Arabistan is the ancient Elam, subsequently Susiana, capital Susa. Mosul, which lies north of Irak Arabi, is the ancient Accad or Assyria, whose chief town was

Nineveh, near Mosul. Lastly, there is Kurdistan, the ancient Media, the capital of which was Ecbatana, now called Hamadan. Of these five great kingdoms of antiquity, two now belong to Turkey, and three to Persia, but once they were united under the rules of Darius, Alexander, and the Seleucians.

Busrah itself recalls Venice. It is built on piles, and the little creeks which run into the Shatel Arab form the streets. Along the banks of these canals are built the brick warehouses and villas of the British traders and Turkish officials. To the west lie the bazars, and the Arab, Christian, Jewish, and Sabian quarters. It is Venice without its palaces, and with a profusion of palm trees.

The tongue of the people is chiefly Arabic, but Turkish is the official language. Trade is almost entirely in the hands of the English, and there are several large mercantile firms. The Tigris is navigated as far as Baghdad by two steamship companies, one British and the other Turkish, and there is also a certain amount of sailing traffic. The four kinds of boats used are—mehalas, or feluccas, with one large sail; kalatches, or pig-skin rafts; bellums, a sort of small gondola, and gophers, which are nothing more than primitive tubs. For some miles up the river there are beautiful gardens, and when they end there is swamp with plenty of snipe and pig. After that the desert.

The town itself is fairly clean, and the bazars are airy and well stocked. Neither the palace nor the mosques are worth seeing, and the only good build-

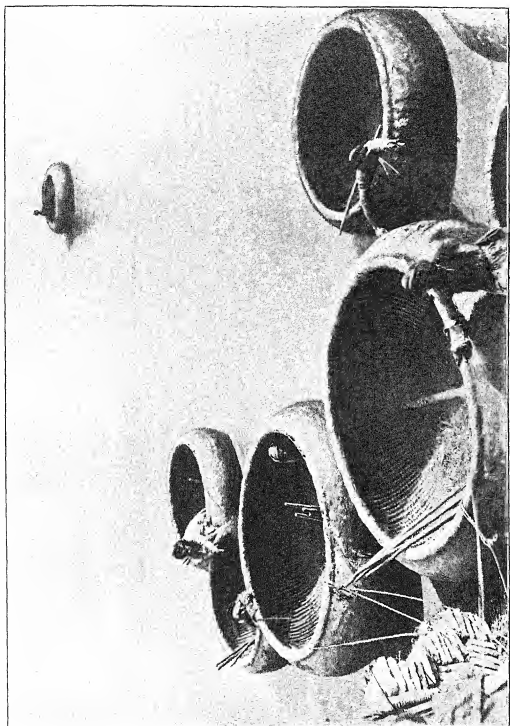
ing is a new military hospital. There are three Turkish cruisers in the Shatel Arab, armed with a few guns, but totally unprovided with ammunition. Their commanders live in terror of the occasional visits of British men-of-war. Our influence in Arabia is in fact all powerful, as troops could at any time be shipped from Bombay to either Busrah, Baghdad, or even Jeddah. During the Armenian troubles in 1895, the Turkish officials in Arabia were afraid of this being done, and the more so, because they are quite aware that English rule would be by no means unpopular with the inhabitants of Jeddah or even of Mecca. The Sultan's authority as Sultan amounts to very little, and as Caliph it is nothing in Arabia. If he lost the temporal sovereignty, the Sunnis would quickly secede from his spiritual rule. So it is difficult to see where the Turks could establish their capital if they were turned out of Europe. Mecca is impossible, for not only would the Sherif of Mecca never brook any rival to his power, but also the means of communication with the rest of the Empire would depend entirely on the goodwill of the owners of the Suez Canal. Baghdad is too close to the Persian and Arabian frontiers, and there the Sultan would lie at the mercy of lukewarm allies and bitter foes. At Damascus he would be in the country of the Nestorians, and at Erzerum in the heart of Armenia. Angora, Cæsarea, or Sivas, in Asia Minor, where he could count on the firm support of the Osmanli Turks and their friends,

the Muslim Circassians, would seem to be the only possible places. But the loss of Stambul would practically mean the end of the Ottoman Empire.

The British Consul, or Assistant Political Agent at Busrah, belongs to the Political Department of the Indian Government. He is under the direct orders of the Consul-General at Baghdad, who has at his command a gun-boat of the Indian marine and a guard of thirty Sepoys. Besides this there are British mail steamers in Busrah half the week, and very frequently British men-of-war, so that the Vali and his myrmidons are quite outnumbered by us. Still they do their best to make the work of the Steam Navigation Company as difficult as possible, issuing absurd regulations by which the Company are only allowed to run two boats on the river at a time, although there is plenty of traffic for six.

After seeing the Sabian quarter we embarked on board the steamer Khalifah for Baghdad. At Kermah we passed the mouth of the Euphrates and entered the Tigris proper. The river is here about 350 yards wide, but higher up it widens to about a quarter of a mile. The water is muddy, but the current is swift, and it is deep. The Euphrates is still swifter but very shallow, a combination which makes navigation of it impossible.

We passed many wretched little villages built of mud huts, the natives of which pursued us along the bank begging for oranges or small coins. The first place of any size was Amarah, a muddy, dirty town with a tall, wooden bazar, and old-



GOPHERS.

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fashioned houses with latticed windows, through which the veiled ladies of the harems looked out. We stayed there four hours unloading Manchester goods, and had to anchor outside all night owing to the darkness. The higher we went the more the flood rose, until we could see nothing but water for miles, and the few Arabs who had not fled to the mountains were camping out on the tops of their almost submerged huts. The river bank was discernible by tall reeds, in which we saw and shot three or four boar. Now and then the bank disappeared altogether, and twice the steamer wandered off into the flooded rice fields. Once we steamed over the top of a village and picked up a miserable Arab, who had stayed on top of his hut too long. The people on board were very amusing. They were all Shiah Indians and Persians going on a pilgrimage to Kerbela, and of course sworn foes of the indigenous Turks and Arabs, who are all Sunnis. They made their own little fires, and spread out their beds on deck, and never moved even when a severe thunderstorm broke over them. As soon as the sun came out again they took off their clothes and hung them up to dry on the mast stays.

There were also two Englishmen on the steamer going to conduct some excavations near Babylon. Whether they ever reached their destination is doubtful, as the whole country was under water and they could only have got there in a gopher; besides which the country was "disturbed." The Arabs had just fought three battles with the Imperial

troops, and had threatened to kill the American whom our two friends were going to relieve. The Turkish authorities at Baghdad would not provide them with an escort, and the Consul-General refused to sanction their going without one.

On the day before we reached Baghdad we passed the ruins of Seleucia and Ctesiphon. The former was the capital of King Seleucus, one of Alexander the Great's generals, and the latter was the metropolis of the Parthian kingdom. The only remains are a fine brick arch and a wing of the royal palace, which are in a good state of preservation.

We steamed into Baghdad on a Sunday morning, and found it in danger of being flooded. But we were not sorry to get off the boat, as we had taken 140 hours to steam 500 miles, a very slow time. We stayed with Colonel Mockler at the British Residency for the next five days.

## CHAPTER II

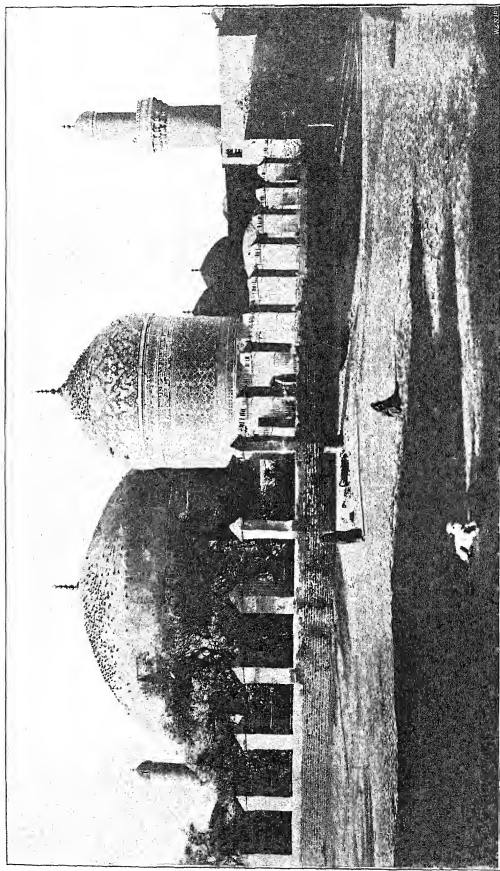
### BAGHDAD

BAGHDAD, the Garden of David, was founded by the Caliph Al Mansor, second Prince of the Abbasside Dynasty in 762 A.D., and it at once became the capital of Islam. Under Harun al Raschid (A.D. 800) it was distinguished for its science as well as for its elegance and splendour, and we are told that Baghdad and Bussorah were rival schools of learning. In 1260 it was taken by the Mongols under Haloko, and again by the Turks in 1640, since when it has been governed from Stambul. The population is now over 200,000 and the city is said to contain 100 mosques and fifty public baths. It lies on the two banks of the Tigris; on the western shore live the Shiahs, the Persian colony who look after the shrines of Kerbela and Kazimaim, and here is Harun al Raschid's house and the tomb of his favourite wife, Zobeida. On the eastern side are the Sunnis and the Christian traders. The two banks are generally connected by a bridge of boats, but while we were there all the traffic was carried on by means of small launches and gophers, the

bridge having been washed away by the floods. The desert on the northern side of the town was under water, and the western fields had become a swamp and were rapidly sinking out of sight. Every day 3000 men from the garrison were set to work, banking up the outer wall and the counterscarp of the inner ditch. For two days too the populace itself was impressed to labour from dawn to sunset against the flood, it being a custom of the city not to levy taxes but to execute all public works by forced labour. During this time the shops were closed, but on the third day the waters went down a little, and the bazars were opened. We walked through their fine avenues crowded with people and well stocked with shawls, silks, belts, gold and silver cloth, besides many Chaldæan and Assyrian relics. Many of these are genuine, but the Jews and Armenians devote themselves to the work of imitation with such clever results that only a connoisseur should risk buying.

The finest building on the Turkish or Arab side is the Serai, the Governor's palace, which includes all the Government offices, the law courts, the river customs, and police bureaux. The trade of the place lies chiefly in the hands of three European firms, Lynch, Holtz, and Sassoon. Consulates are maintained by England, Germany, Russia, Persia, France, Austria, America, and Switzerland, the first four of which are the most important. As at Busrah, Turkish is the official, and Arabic the popular tongue.





MOSQUE OF KAZIMAIN BAGHDAD.

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The finest mosque in Baghdad is that of Kazi-maim, on the Shiah side of the river, where two of the holy Imams are buried. But the great place of interest is Kerbela, a small town lying about sixty miles west of Baghdad. Here are buried Huseyn and Hassan, the two sainted sons of Ali, the Prophet's cousin and successor. Huseyn was killed here by order of the Caliph Omar, and the place is still the real centre of the Shiah religion. "Kerbelaï," the title given to a man who has made the pilgrimage to Kerbela, is more esteemed in Persia than "Hajji," the pilgrim to Mecca. The great difference between the two sects of Sunnis and Shiahs is that the Shiahs receive Ali as the direct successor of Mahomet and as the second Caliph, while the Sunnis interpose Abu Bekr and Omar, and insist that Ali was only the fourth on the roll. The Sunnis also believe that the Caliphate has descended through the various dynasties of the Ommiades, the Abbassides and the Memluk princes of Egypt, to the Sultan who is now the orthodox Amir el Muminim or Commander of the Faithful. The Shiahs on the other hand maintain that the right line of descent was from Ali through his sons Hassan and Huseyn to the Twelve Holy Imams, the last of whom disappeared in the tenth century. The Shiahs believe that this Imam is still living and that he will eventually return as the Mahdi and rightful Messiah of Islam.

His coming was predicted by the Prophet in the following passage :



"When you see black banners coming out of Khorasan, go forth and join them, for the Imam of God will be with those banners, and his name is El Mahdi. He will fill the world with equity and justice."

Hence the Persians do not look upon the Shah as anything more than their temporal sovereign, and the real power lies in the hands of the Mollahs whose chief lives at Kerbela. The Shiahs all look to Ali and his sons as the heroes of their religion. In Kurdistan there are even some who say that Ali is God (Aliillahis), and among orthodox Persians the greatest religious event of the whole year is the tenth day of Muharrem, the anniversary of the murder of Huseyn by the Caliph Omar. On that day all Persia mourns the martyr and execrates Omar, and no one who has not seen this ceremony can realise to what lengths the usually impassive Oriental can be carried by religious enthusiasm. In Azerbaijan, Europeans generally keep to their houses the whole of the tenth Muharrem, as the mob and the soldiers are all in a state of uncontrollable frenzy.

I saw the ceremony once at Constantinople, where there is a large Persian colony, and even in the heart of the Sunnis the fervour of the celebrants was intense. The rite took place after sunset in a large open caravanserai known as the Valideh Khan. The Persian ambassador attended as representing the Shah, and except for a few Turkish soldiers and European onlookers, the whole assemblage con-

sisted of Persians. The first part of the celebration was a kind of miracle play, Huseyn and Hassan being presented, with their children, in the chief acts of their lives. But soon the play became a procession, a dreadful sight, which made the few women present faint. First came a group of men leaping, shouting, and brandishing torches; then lads, stripped to the waist, beating themselves with scourges, which if they did not actually draw blood made hideous weals. After these a palanquin appeared, containing children representing Hassan's orphans, sitting under huge black banners, and followed by Huseyn's white horse with a dove tied to its saddle. Then more torches and lanterns, and turbaned Mollahs chanting passages from the Koran; and in the rear a ghastly group of men wearing nothing but their breeches, weeping and cutting themselves with knives. Every now and then a fanatic dropped down exhausted by the loss of blood. All the time the spectators kept up loud crying and weeping, and even the Turkish soldiers joined in. One never forgets the spectacle of the flashing torches and bleeding flesh, nor the clashing of the cymbals, and the frenzied lamentations, nor the gruesome smell of sweat and warm blood with which the place reeked. The origin of this worship dates back to pre-Muslim times, and is a mixture of the fire worship of Zoroaster, the sacrifices to Baal, and the mourning for the death of Adonis.

A passage in the Vulgate about the worship of

Baal exactly describes what I saw on the tenth Muharrem :

*Clamabant ergo voce magna, et incidebant se juxta ritum suum cultris et lanceolis, donec perfunderentur sanguine.*

To return to Kerbela and its pilgrims. Reverencing Ali and his sons as they do, it is not wonderful that the Persians prefer to make pilgrimages to Kerbela, Mecca being so much further away and given over to the Sunnis, with whom they have little in common. Pilgrimages set out every year from all the big towns in Persia to the number of twenty or thirty, the men often taking their families with them. They move very slowly by day marches to their destination, preceded by a man with a red flag. They stay at Kerbela or Meshed about a month, the richer pilgrims offering gifts at the various shrines, the poorer collecting relics. Then they set out on the long tedious way home again, but with the right to bear the title of "Kerbelaï," or "Meshedi," and a certainty of eternal salvation.

We met many caravans of pilgrims, and they always seemed devout and in earnest about their journey. Their worst hardship is the extravagant demands made by officials on the road in return for a passport. The Persian Consul at Jeddah is said to make £5000 a year out of them.

The walls of all the caravanserais on the road from Baghdad to Teheran are inscribed with "Ya Ali," "Ya Hassan," and long prayers and sentences

from the Koran, executed by passing Hajjis. It is certain that these rival pilgrimages do much to keep up the hatred that exists between the Turks and Persians.

Hillah, where the ruins of Babylon are, is within reach of Baghdad, but we could not get there as all the intervening country was under water.

While in Baghdad we visited the Vali, Hassan Pasha, a fine old man who talked most beautiful Turkish. We also had tea with Rejeb Pasha, the Field-Marshal commanding the Sixth Army Corps.

He told me he had been at school with Mahomet Zekki Pasha, and showed us two regiments drafted from Albania, big bony men and well disciplined, but not so carefully drilled as those at Ersinjan.

We got together a caravan to take us to Kerman-shah in Kurdistan, *viâ* Khanikin, but we were delayed three days by a hurricane which made it unsafe to cross the flooded desert in a gopher. At last on the 30th of January the wind had sunk enough to allow us to cross. We crammed ourselves and our belongings into three gophers, and after two hours' punting and paddling reached the road, which was little better than a swamp. We passed four of the filthiest towns in the world on this route. In each of them the street was a mass of black fetid mud, into which our horses sank up to the girths. The caravanserais had no doors, and smelt of rotting carcases and vegetables. It rained every day, and we were never dry until we reached the snows of Kurdistan. At Khanikin, the

last of these terrible Turkish towns, we had to submit to a visit from the Custom House officials. They took a *Longman's Magazine* and a *Statesman's Year-Book* away with them, but returned them in a few minutes saying that the head of the office had read them through and that there was nothing illegal in them. They then gave us our permission "pour quitter la Turquie," and next day we re-entered Persia, gradually getting near the foot of the mighty Zagros range which borders the Iranian plateau.

PART IV

*PERSIA WEST TO EAST*



## CHAPTER I

### THROUGH KURDISTAN

KURDISTAN is not, strictly speaking, a province. It lies partly in Persia and partly in Turkey, and represents roughly the eastern half of ancient Media, and the western half of Assyria. The Kurds are a very ancient people, speaking a language of their own akin to Persian. They are probably the descendants of the Carduchii or Corducui. Mandeville says of Kurdistan :

In that kingdom of Media are many great hills and little of level ground. Saracens dwell there, and another kind of people called Cordines.

The Kurds are scattered far beyond the boundaries of Kurdistan, and their robber reputation has clung to them since the days of Alexander. In religion they are both Shiahs and Sunnis, and there are besides a few Yezeedis or devil worshippers, and Aliillahis already mentioned. They all have, whatever their creed, a great many odd superstitions, traceable to some extent to the old faith of the Magi.

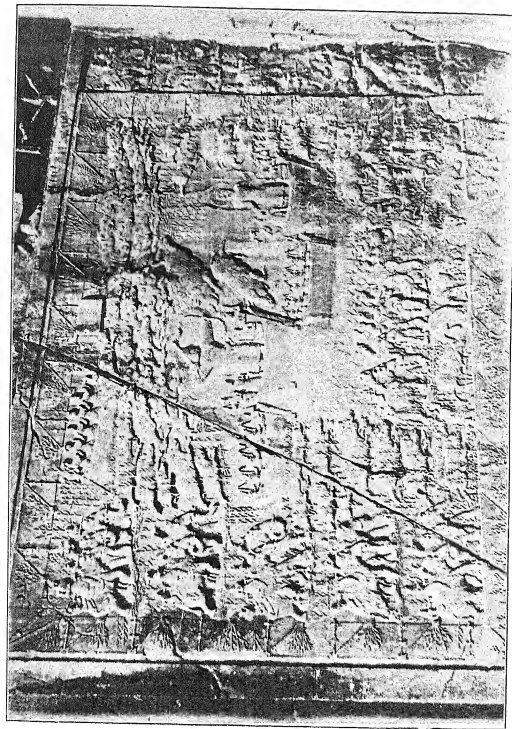
In appearance the men are very handsome, and



the women ruddy and better looking than any we saw in Persia. They all have an inordinate love of finery, and wear brilliant colours and a great many ornaments. The Kurds are hospitable to strangers, loyal to their chieftains, and cleaner in their habits than most Persians. Those who have been trained make excellent soldiers. On our way to Teheran we nearly always stayed with Kurds, although we occasionally came across the northern Bakhtiari, the Felli Laurs and some migratory Turkish tribes. The women make carpets which are artistic, though somewhat gaudy, and the men occupy themselves with shooting and pastoral pursuits. Their little huts are decorated inside with rugs, carpets, shining brass bowls, enamelled boxes, and now and then a cheap Russian print.

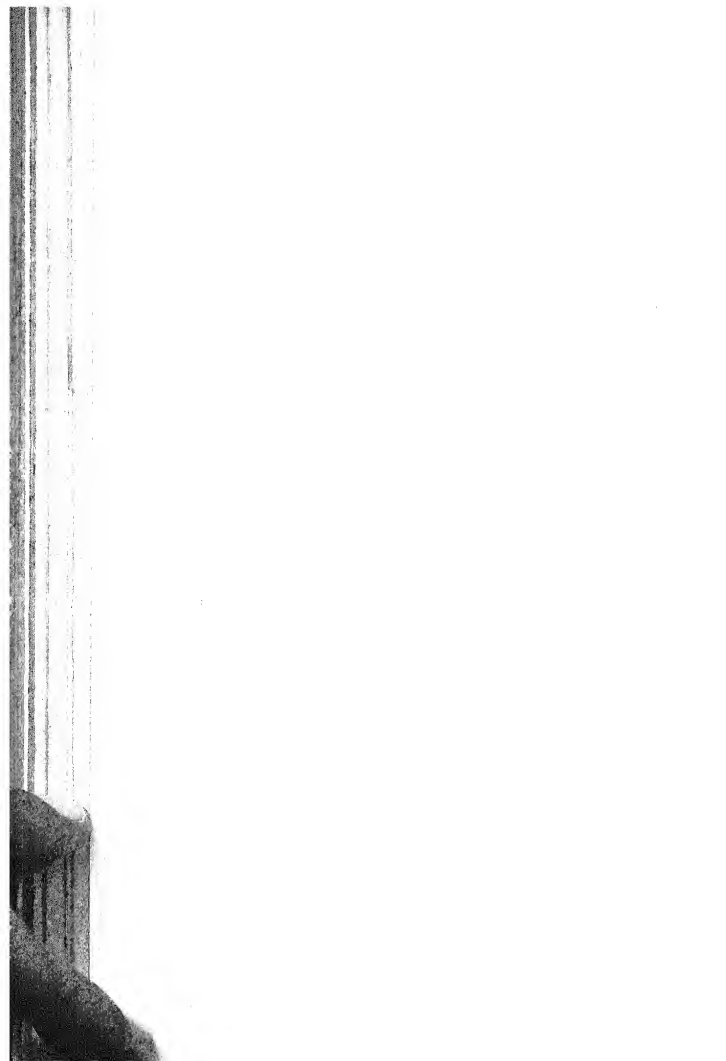
All through Kurdistan we travelled without an escort, our cavass from Baghdad having left us at the frontier. We went by caravan as far as Kermanshah; from there to Hamadan we tried to chapper, but finding the post very slow, took to a caravan again for the last part of the road.

On the third day of our journey we got into deep snow. Luckily it was still hard, and although the air was keen the weather remained good during the whole journey. Considering that it was in the wildest part of Persia and the depth of winter we escaped very easily, nothing worse happening than frost-bitten ears. We passed strings of Haj caravans and corpse caravans going to Kerbela. It is the great wish of all devout Shiahs to be buried



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ROCK CARVING AT TAKHT I BOSTAN.



near the shrine of Ali, and the horrid practice of transporting corpses there in batches for burial is resorted to. Some of the rich Persians we met were seated in kejavahs, but they looked miserably cold, and we were better off riding. The early morning and the late evening were the most trying, as when the sun was not up, the cut-up snow on the track refroze, and we had to ride over a bad verglas. Once we had to cross ploughed land frozen to the hardness of iron, and very rough. Here I remember we passed a solitary Persian muffled up to the eyes, with a long grim-looking coffin slung across his saddle-bow, a sinister figure.

Frequently we had to stop to shoot horses which had broken their legs and been left by their owners to die. The nights were spent in little Kurdish huts, where we were almost stifled by the smoke, and lived on partridges which cost us twopence apiece. On February 10th we reached Kermanshah, the mountain peaks around us rising to a height of 16,000 feet, and everything wrapped in a glittering garment of snow, a really magnificent sight. We had ridden the 217 miles from Baghdad in eleven days, which was not fast going ; but very fair, considering the state of the road. At Kermanshah we were entertained by the British Agent, a Persian, whose full name and title were Hajji Mirza Abdul Rahim Khan Vekil i Dowlit Ingiliz. He provided us with a comfortable guest-room, and showed us every sort of hospitality. He and his forefathers have represented British interests in Kermanshah

during the last eighty years, and he is as eager over our commercial expansion in Persia as any Englishman could be.

Kermanshah is a large clean town, with a population of about 100,000, mainly Kurds. The bazars are stocked from Ispahan and Baghdad, and the chief industry is in carpets. The only buildings of any interest are the Ark, where the Governor lives; the barracks, built to hold a thousand men, but now three parts empty; and the Bagh i Shahzadeh, or Prince's Garden, which is now only a ruin, but which must once have been very beautiful. The day we left, our host took us to see the Takht i Bostan, the most renowned rock carvings in Persia. They date from the time of Darius, and are, in their way, quite as interesting and beautiful as those at Persepolis. The large figures, which have been more exposed, are worn by the wind, rain, and time; but the smaller ones, which are protected by an archway, are quite clear and very striking. The large reliefs include:

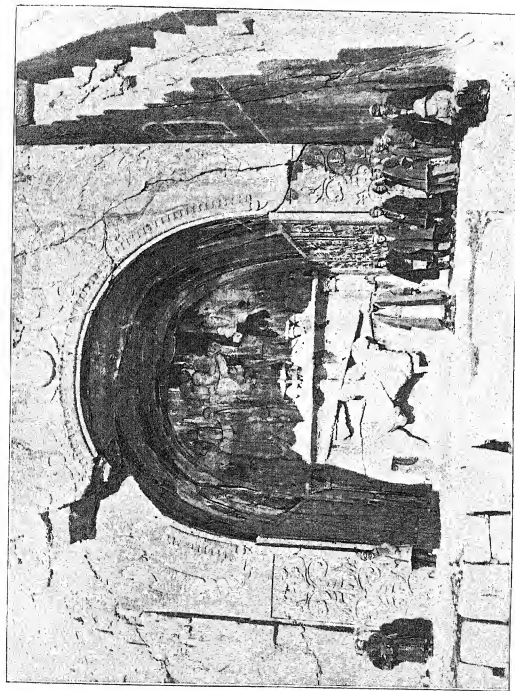
(1) A large group of three figures standing; identified as Darius, his queen, and a conquered king.

(2) A figure of Cyrus on horseback, armed with a lance.

(3) Two armed men, probably soldiers.

(4) Four figures: the god Ormuzd, Darius, a prostrate monarch, and an attendant.

The smaller sculptures represent nobles hunting elephants and bears, and the king riding in state with the royal parasol over him, and attended by dancers and musicians. Besides these there are two



ROCK CARVING OF CYRUS AT TAKHT I BOSTAN.

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large winged figures partially restored. It is supposed that an Achæmenian city stood on the site of Kermanshah.

Not long after we left Kermanshah we passed Behistun, where Semiramis is supposed to have built a city, and then came to Kangavar, a queer little walled town buried in a clump of bleached poplars. The last stage was the worst of all, for we had to cross a pass over 9000 feet high, in deep snow and a tearing wind. Once over the pass a gallop of about twenty miles brought us to Hamadan, the most lofty city in Persia. Here also a Persian was the British representative, and showed us every kindness. As it was the month of Ramazan he could only dine with us, and used to watch us eating luncheon with a hungry eye. We were glad to meet our old friend the doctor from Resht. He told us that he had had an adventurous journey from Kazvin to Hamadan, as all his caravan had sworn to murder him as a renegade from the faith. But he was too many for them, and seemed as happy and energetic as ever.

Hamadan is the ancient Ecbatana, and is said to have been built by Dejoces in 750 B.C. It was the capital of Media, and the original city possessed seven distinct enceintes, of which the outer one was coloured white, the next one black, the next purple, the next blue, and the last three orange, silver, and gold respectively. Inside the seventh wall lay the royal palace where Astyages, grandfather of Cyrus, reigned. Ecbatana was the summer,



as Susa was the winter, residence of the Achæmænian kings. Its population is now about 50,000, composed of Persians, Armenians, Kurds, and Jews. The latter do a good trade in counterfeit relics, and enjoy some prestige through a shrine where Esther and Mordecai are supposed to have been buried. Inside the tomb are two profusely carved wooden sarcophagi, with an inscription stating that it was repaired in 850 A.D. The saints' bodies rest in a vault beneath, but when one looks through the narrow hole in the floor above there is nothing to be seen in the dim light. However, the tombs are supposed to be the most authentic in Persia, and are venerated by both Jews and Muslims.

The town has handsome bazars, but it is dirty and untidy, and considering its great past deficient in interest.

We set off over thick snow again, and at Noviran found ourselves in a Turkish-speaking district. At Bagh-i-Shah we caught sight of the enormous peak of Demavend rising straight up behind Teheran. Two 'days' more hard riding over a stony plain brought us out of the snow region and into the vineyards which surround the capital. We arrived there on the 24th of February, and the British Minister kindly entertained us at the Legation. We had been away 101 days, much longer than we had expected, and in that time had travelled 2190 miles, of which we had ridden 1620, so that we were not sorry to rest before resuming our journey east.

## CHAPTER II

### THROUGH KHORASAN

BEFORE leaving Teheran we had to provide ourselves with two new servants. Mahomet, who had proved such a treasure up till now, was three times drunk on duty, and we had to get rid of him. He was excused from keeping the fast of Ramazan as he had been so long on the road, and so he drank all day with the feasters who were not keeping the fast, and all night with the fasters, who, as soon as gunfire has gone at sunset, sit up all night carousing. The cook, Ali, we had only engaged as far as Teheran, but he was not a loss like Mahomet. At last, after a great hunt, we found two natives of Teheran, Ibrahim and Ali Mahomet. They were very clever and useful, but their charges were so extortionate that we had to get rid of them at Meshed.

Permission had been given us by the Russian Minister of War to visit the Transcaspian Provinces, and we had heard from Pekin that special leave had been granted by the Tsung li Yamen for us to enter China from the Russian

side, and to continue east or north as we pleased. The passports were on their way and overtook us at Meshed. We had letters of introduction to the Governors of Transcaspia and Samarkand, and also to the Russian Resident at Bokhara. However, even with all these papers and permits we had some difficulty in Transcaspia.

The first stage of our journey was to Meshed, a great city lying on the Persian border of Afghanistan and Transcaspia. It is 550 miles from Teheran, and separated from it by a dull and uninteresting tract of country. The weather broke too when we had started, and the whole day we had nothing but rain or snow, interspersed with thunderstorms and blizzards.

The great eastern road of Persia is divided into four nearly equal portions, by the towns of Semnan, Shahrud, and Sebzewar. The first part of our journey was occupied in skirting the southern slopes of the Elburz, which at Astrabad trends northward to the Turcoman desert, and so forms Persia's northern frontier. The small provinces lying between Teheran and Shahrud are at present under the rule of the Governor-General at Astrabad, who is accordingly a very powerful prince. But once in Khorasan, everything is dependent on the Governor-General at Meshed, who has nearly one fourth of the whole Empire under his rule.

On the third day after leaving Teheran, we found ourselves under Mount Demavend, the biggest peak in Persia (19,000 feet) and still an active

volcano. Demavend, or "dwelling of the genii," is a mine of Persian folk-lore. Here Noah's ark rested, so they say; here lived Jemsheed, Subduer of Devils, and Rustam the Iranian Hercules. Here is buried the giant Zohak, a tyrant and usurper, and the flames of the volcano are said to come out of his mouth. All round are caverns full of enchanted treasures guarded by gnomes. The mountain is very impressive with its great snow peak, and its rocky crags and grassy slopes below. It was our last sight of grass for some time, for that night the snow began to fall and never stopped for long until after we reached Shahrud. We were able to buy lambs and eggs all the way, but no wine, as the country people are much more abstemious than those in the towns.

We got on all right as far as Firuzkuh, a pretty little town built into the side of a mountain where the Shah frequently hunts. His preserves extend all along here and from the Caspian jungle to Kishlak, near the Caspian Gates. This is the name given to the long pass through which Darius fled to Bactria, and it probably took its name from the tribe of the Caspii, as it is over 100 miles from the sea. In fact it is only forty miles from Teheran, if we are to believe Arrian who, talking of its distance from Rhages, says:

*ὁδὸν ἡμέρας μίᾱς ἐλάννοντι ὡς Ἀλεξάνδρος ἦγε,*

and however fast Alexander rode he had a division of cavalry with him, so forty miles would have been his limit.

On leaving Firuzkuh we had to cross a deep swampy valley, and then climb a snow-covered mountain. We lost one of our horses in a drift, as there was no track, but although he fell a great depth, he suffered no harm, and we found him again. That night we stayed with the headman of a village, who told us that he had never seen a Firengi in his life. He gave us his best room, built of mud, very high but small. We were nearly suffocated in the night by the smoke from the charcoal brazier, which does duty for a fire in these parts. Next night, however, we were better off at Semnan in the Governor's house, a fine airy building with a big swimming bath in the hall. The town has a great many fruit gardens, which make it pretty. The population is about 20,000, and the trade almost entirely Russian. A great many Armenians live here, and very frequently become Russian subjects, with a view to securing the protection of the Russian Consul at Astrabad. The most interesting building in Semnan was the Ark, or Citadel, decorated outside with striking but impossible pictures of Rustem killing snakes, and with two gaudy Persian soldiers painted on either side of the entrance. The telegraph wire to Meshed is rented by our Government from the Shah. The clerks are Persian, but they and the wire are looked after by an English superintendent.

Our next halting place was Damghan, which disputes with Shahrud the distinction of being the site of the ancient Parthian capital, the real name of which is lost, but which the Greeks called Hecatompy-

los. It was there that Alexander found the dead body of Darius, and it is also famous as being the place where Nadir Shah finally beat the Afghans in 1729. There is an Arab brick minaret dating from the tenth century.

Shahrud was certainly one of the great cities of the Parthian Empire, if it was not the capital itself. Arsaces, first of his race, dispossessed Seleucus in 252 B.C., and his dynasty ruled over a kingdom which extended from Heret to Baghdad. In 225 A.D. they were themselves driven out by the Sassanian dynasty under Ardeshir Bebekhan. The Parthian cavalry was justly celebrated throughout the world. The Parthians were a people of Turanian or Mongolian origin, and of nomad habits, with rude ideas of magnificence, but they never developed a literature nor an architecture, as is proved by the fragments of buildings and coins which remain.

The position of Shahrud is remarkable. To the north lie the great snow-covered mountains of the Shahrud range, and to the south the wastes of the boundless Salt Desert. Three roads are concentrated here, one from Meshed, another from Teheran, and the third from the Caspian which leads from Astrabad over a narrow and easily defended mountain pass. An army stationed at Shahrud would at once command the approaches from the sea, and at the same time effectually prevent any junction between forces operating in Khorasan and the west.

It is only fifty miles from Astrabad to Shahrud, and with a little skilful engineering the road could

easily be made passable for artillery, or at any rate for light field-guns. No doubt the Russians realise its strategic importance. The whole place is dominated by Russian influence. There is a Russian Consul, Russian traders, a Russian telegraph line, and a small Russian naval station, at Ashurda Island.

Astrabad, a picturesque town built of stone, lies at the end of the fertile province of Mazanderan, and although the neighbouring country is almost uncultivated, wheat, barley, rice, and cotton could be grown. We had thought of going up to Astrabad, and keeping along an upper road that runs by way of Tekran to Meshed. But the snow was very deep, and the passes were said to be blocked, so after seeing Shahrud we settled to go along the main road, at any rate as far as Sebzewar. We soon found ourselves in Turkoman country, and saw a few of the peasants in the villages in immense sheepskin bonnets. The Turkomans used to be the terror of the country side, and especially of the Meshed pilgrims, who travelled in armed caravans for fear of them. The four stages out of Shahrud are still called the "Stages of Terror," and all along the road are mud and brick forts in which the yokels used to take refuge when the Turkomans came down on plundering expeditions. Besides carrying off cattle they used to kidnap people, who were sold as slaves in the markets of Merv and Bokhara. As the Turkomans are Sunnis, slavery under them was additionally degrading to the Persians. However, since Skobelef's campaign in 1881, the Turkomans

have been quite tractable, and the road is now as safe as any in Persia.

We came into Khorasan proper over the Pul-i-Abrishum, or Bridge of Silk, a wretched brick bridge over a muddy stream. This immense province, which occupies the whole north-eastern part of Persia, has an area of 150,000 square miles, a population of 80,000 and a revenue of £154,000, besides what is paid in kind. It boasts one metalled road, that from Askabad on the Transcaspian Railway to Meshed. This was built through Russian energy about five years ago. The population includes Persians, Turkomans, Kurds, Arabs, Afghans, Uzbeks, and Tartars. They are nearly always disaffected to the Shah, and an imitation of Russian clothes and manners, and a knowledge of the Russian language, are constantly noticeable especially among the Armenians.

In Sebzewar we were entertained by the Governor who came from Khoi. The town is the centre of the silk and wool trade. In the bazars I noticed that Russian goods had a monopoly. The long camel journey from Bunder Abbas or Trebizond makes competition from us almost impossible. We saw the turquoise mines of Madan, which if properly worked would be very remunerative. As it is the total output is £25,000 a year. From these mines to Nishapur the road was very bad, and the weather worse. Nishapur, which is now in a deplorable condition, was the Nisaya of the Greeks, and the supposed birthplace of Dionysius. It has been de-



stroyed by half the conquerors of the world, including Alexander, Mahmud of Ghuzni, Togrul Beg, Jenghis and Tamerlane. It was at one time the capital of the great Afghan Empire, and lay on the old trade route from Europe *viâ* the Caspian to China. Now it is a wool and silk centre, and opium, tobacco, grain and rice are produced in abundance. But there is great room for improvement in the manner of cultivation. Outside the town in a deserted field is the tomb of Omar el Khayam, the tent-maker, whom Fitzgerald has made immortal for us by his English translation of *The Rubaiyat*.

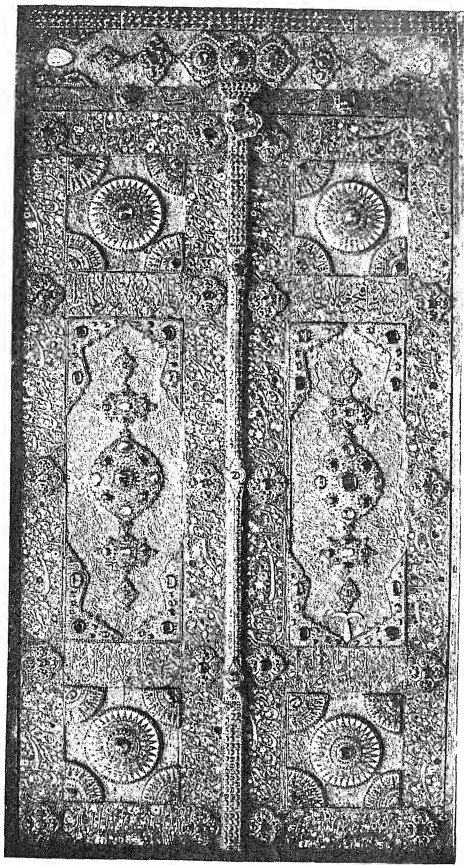
After several days of hard riding we sighted the golden dome of Meshed from the Salute Hill, where all the pilgrims halt to pray and make vows. The hill is strewn with graves and little votive heaps of stones.

## CHAPTER III

### MESHED

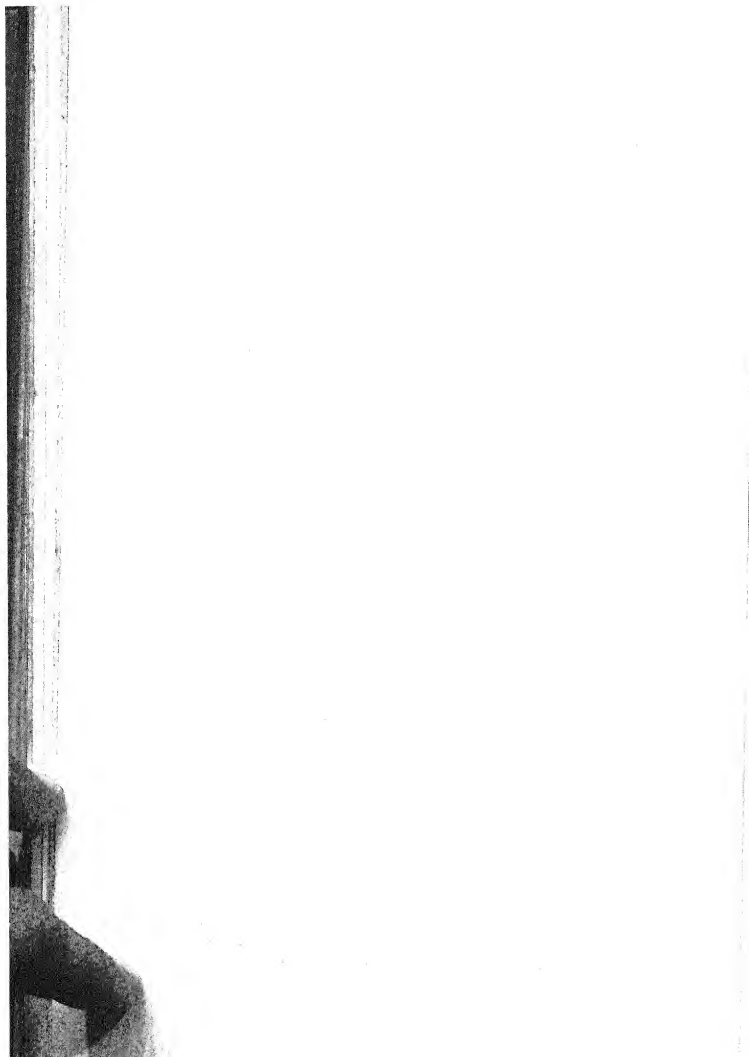
MESHED was *en fête* when we rode into it up the Khiaban Avenue, the longest straight street in Persia. At the top a chain was stretched across an archway protecting the shrine of the Imam Riza from the sacrilegious foot of the European. We turned to the left pushing our way through the crowd in the bazar, until at last we found the British Residency where Mr. Ney Elias, then Consul-General, kindly put us up. The Residency is a well-built house in a large garden laid out with trees. There is a guard of a few Sepoys and some Persian "gholams" or messengers. The rival consulate is the Russian, which has a much larger *personnel*. Until these consulates were established in 1889 Meshed was without any foreign representatives. The Governor is now rather overshadowed by the two foreign agencies, the more so as he is only a deputy, the nominal Viceroy being the Salar es Sultaneh, a brother of the Shah, who is only twelve. The great personage in the

city is the guardian of the shrine, Mutwalla Bashi. His appointment lies in the Shah's gift, and the holder is not necessarily a priest; he may be Governor of Khorasan as well. The Mutwalla Bashi keeps up greater state than the Governor, since he has at his command the immense revenues of the shrine, the "vakuf" or endowments of which comprise lands and taxes all over Persia. The Imam Riza who is buried within the shrine was the eighth of the succession, and was killed in the ninth century by the Sunni Caliph Mamun, son of Harun al Raschid. It was not until 1330 that the shrine became celebrated. When the Sefavi dynasty adopted the Shiah faith as the state religion of the Empire, Meshed at once rose into prominence, and is now one of the chief places of pilgrimage in Persia, ranking immediately after Mecca and Kerbela. All sorts of privileges are enjoyed by the Hajjis during their stay in Meshed. The principal one is that of making temporary marriages, the contract being from one day to ninety-nine years and terminable at the husband's discretion. A fee is paid to the Mollah who performs the ceremony, which is merely a thin veil over a prostitution which at once makes the place attractive and puts money into the priests' pockets. Indigent pilgrims receive food and lodging within the precincts of the sacred college for three days, after which they must find work. This is easy enough as there are over 2000 paid attendants on the foundation, most of whom



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JEWELLED DOOR OF THE SHRINE, MESHEH.



only get one day's work a week. The mosque which contains the tomb is surrounded by a sanctuary or "Bast," a quarter of a mile square. All the entrances to the Bast are marked by a chain slung across the road, and beyond these no European may go, but it would be easy to defy the regulation in disguise. The Sabu, or Inner Court, contains the shrine with its gilded dome and two minarets. The gilding is now only copper, although it was once of thick gold plates.

The shrine is still a fine place, beautifully decorated. Near it stands the mosque of Gowher Shad, built in 1440, with a magnificent arch and a blue dome. The revenue of the shrine is said to exceed £17,000 from the endowment alone ; but large sums are also obtained from the pilgrims. Enormous prices are paid by pious Mohammedans for the right of being buried in or near the shrine ; and this is a profitable request for the priests, who ask what they like for granting it.

There are sixteen caravanserais and fourteen medvessehs, or sacred colleges, in Meshed. Two fine squares and a tumbledown palace complete the roll of public buildings.

The garrison is composed of three regiments, but, owing to various causes, the fighting strength of Khorasan represents little more than a thousand rank and file.

The industries of Meshed have declined. Damascened sword blades used to be made, but the people

are now idle and subsist on the pilgrims. Silk, cotton and velvet are sold, but they are not nearly as good as those to be bought in the markets of Bokhara. There is a branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia and a telegraph office, the terminus of the Meshed political line. Fifteen miles to the north lies Toos, the ancient seat of government, where Ferdusi, one of the great poets of Persia, is buried. He was born in 940 A.D., and lived at the court of Mahmud of Ghuzni, for whom he wrote his great work, "The Shah Nameh, or History of the Kings of Persia." The book was in Pehlevi, or ancient Persian, and its language was so pure that it is said to contain only two Arabic words.

Toos is now only a heap of ruins, and Ferdusi's tomb is very much dilapidated. In the country round, the villages are populous, and there is a great deal of game.

Meshed occupies a very important strategic position, lying as it does on the frontier of Afghanistan, Persia, and Russia. If the Russians should ever make an attempt on India it would not be by the great passes of the Hindu Kush, which are impracticable for a modern army, but by Herat and Kandahar; and Meshed, only fifty miles from the Transcaspian Railway, might be the first stage on the journey.

We were at Meshed eighteen days, as I had another attack of fever and rheumatism. When I was better, we hired a new servant to come as far

as Samarkand, and managed to get our passports visé by the Russian Consul-General. We hired a small caravan, and went over the Atok range, the boundary of north-eastern Persia, to Kaakha, the nearest station on the Transcaspian Railway. We lost our way in the mountains, and did not reach our destination until the 20th.





PART V  
*CENTRAL ASIA*



## CHAPTER I

### RUSSIAN TURKESTAN

OUR journey in Central Asia lasted two months, during which time we passed through Transcaspia, the protected state of Bokhara, and the provinces of Samarkand and Ferghana, until we came to the extreme western frontier of China. There we entered the viceroyalty of Sin Chiang, formerly the kingdom of Kashgar, and from that city we turned north and recrossed the Russian frontier into the Steppe. Travelling through the great provinces of Semiretchinsk and Semipalatinsk, we reached Omsk in Western Siberia, and from there came home by the new Trans-Siberian Railway, *viâ* Samara, the Volga, Nijni, and Moscow.

Russia does not colonise in the sense that England does, she annexes and absorbs. In a comparatively short time after she has occupied a country and subdued the inhabitants, that country becomes an integral part of Russia, and the inhabitants try to become Russians. The Russians do not discourage this assimilation of their nationality, but on the other hand they do not encourage it. The fact

is they have no need to do so. The Slav is the youngest of the Aryan races; it is too strong and fresh and vigorous for the Oriental nations on which Russia has brought her power to bear.

Everything in the Russian system, apart from the character of the Slav race, tends to the extinction of the national characteristics of the countries she conquers. There are no native regiments such as we have in India. The Russians are too wise for that. They desire no possible thorn in their flesh in time of trouble, and the soldiers of the Imperial army in the east are all pure-bred, white-faced young Russians, finer men than we ever see in Europe. Take three men in a company—one is a Finn, he comes from the Baltic, the second is a Circassian from the shores of the Black Sea, the third is a Pole. These three men have nothing in common, neither language nor feeling, but they are all subjects of the Tsar, and their only means of communicating with their officers is in the Tsar's language—Russian. This is one great factor in the power of Russia—her Russian army. The word army comprises nearly all the administrative parts of the Government. In Turkestan, in the Caucasus and in the extreme east, the government is military in name and fact, while in many other parts of the Empire it is military in fact if not in name. The police, the railway porters, the customs officials, the governors, all are soldiers wearing uniform, having military rank, getting military decorations, and looking on themselves as soldiers, not civilians.

Another factor in Russia's power is the Church. One of the chief aims of the Church in Russia is to foster a spirit of loyalty to the Tsar. It is not rich, and depends on the state for its existence as a corporate body, so the reason of its fidelity to the head of the state is not far to seek. The priests exercise a powerful influence over the minds of nine-tenths of the subjects of the Tsar, and it is hardly necessary to point out what a strong prop this is to the Imperial power, every priest being a servant of the Tsar, and considering the exaltation of him and his Empire as their first duty.

The services of the Church in Russia are conducted in the ancient Slav language, and are very impressive. The singing is very fine, and quite different from what one hears anywhere else. The treble chanting is blended with two sets of basses, one singing in harmony and the other in unison. The effect is wonderful, and Russian basses are the finest in the world. I remember, in particular, a service in the Basilica at Vierny one Sunday in June. Few people know where Vierny is, yet it is the capital of a province bigger than England, the province of seven rivers, called Semiretchinsk, which lies in the Steppe on the north-western borders of China. It was an Imperial name-day, and there was a parade of the troops before the service, and an artillery salute was fired. The sun shone brightly on the clean white church, with its blue and gold dome. The fresh colours, if somewhat crude and glaring, as is always

the case in Russia, seemed to harmonise with the Slav character. We went into the church with an officer, and found it full of men in uniform. The Imperial prayer was being sung. The Bishop was standing on the altar steps making genuflexions, while a priest in the centre of the church was chanting the prayer, his voice rising higher and higher as it proceeded. When he reached the last triumphant clause, "Nicholas, son of Alexander, Emperor of All the Russias," the choir and congregation joined in, the trumpets blared, and outside the field-guns boomed out one after the other. The effect was so splendid, that one felt as if at a momentary glimpse the power of Russia was suddenly revealed. The next instant the service was over, the Bishop went out, and the Governor held a reception of the officers, each one as he passed the altar crossing himself and bowing to his chief.

To return to Central Asia. Roughly speaking, its boundaries are the Caspian, the rivers Ural, Irtish, and Ili, and the northern mountains of Afghanistan and Persia. It thus includes the Russian provinces of Transcaspia, Turkestan, and the Steppe, the vassal states of Khiva and Bokhara, and that portion of China formerly known as Tartary, or Chinese Turkestan, and now called Kashgaria. The whole region is perhaps one of the most interesting portions of the world, being the reputed cradle of the human race, the "great divide" of Asia, whence spring the mountain chains which split up the continent into four quarters, and the spot

where the white and yellow races of the world fuse to a certain extent. From here came Jenghis and Baber; here is the one unvisited city on the earth, Lhassa, and here can be seen the latest and best example of the civilising power of Russia.

Beginning with Russian Turkestan, by which I mean so much of Central Asia as lies west of China and south of the Steppe, a few statistics will be necessary. Russian Turkestan is a strip of country 1100 miles long and 600 miles broad, with a population of only three and a half millions, that is, about five to a square mile. The majority of the inhabitants are Kirghiz, but there are also Uzbegs, Turkomans, Tartars, Hazaras, Russians and Sarts. The Uzbegs are a Turki people and alone of all that stock except the Osmanli, the Turks of Turkey, possess a written language and literature. They are the descendents of Jenghis Khan and Baber, founder of the Mogul Empire, who wrote his memoirs in Chagatai or Uzbeg Turki. The Turkomans are a Manchurian race and so are the Hazaras. "Start" is the name given to any Kirghiz, Turkoman or Uzbeg who leaves the plains and establishes himself in the towns. Generally speaking, the Tartars and the Uzbegs lie to the east, the Kirghiz to the north and east, and Hazaras and the Turkomans to the south and west. The latter inhabit the Ust Urt and Kara Kum deserts, and before the war of 1880 their chief cities were Geok, Tepe, and Merv, but their numbers are now rapidly dwindling. There are a few irregular troops of Turkoman cavalry, but

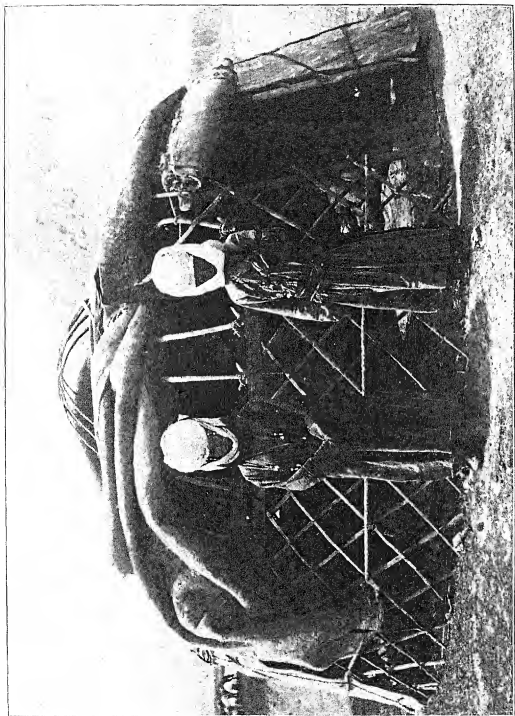


they are not a great success. The Hazaras are mainly emigrants from Afghanistan and are not numerous. In their own country they are a lawless set of brigands, but under Russian rule quite orderly and peaceable.

The Kirghiz are the great nomad people of Central Asia, and are scattered from Bokhara to Omsk and from the shores of the Caspian to the Altai Mountains. They are the ugliest people I have ever seen, with the wrinkled yellow skin of the Chinaman, and the peculiar nose and little eyes of the Turk. They are probably a Mongolian people of the same stock as the Huns, and live in tents made of hide and pitched on basket-work frames. They breed sheep and cattle, which they export, and also have some notion of agriculture. Silk and cotton are produced in a few districts near the rivers, but Central Asia is too waterless for the growth of grain. It is true that the Russians have done wonders in the way of irrigation, and engineers have a great scheme on foot to turn the Oxus, which now flows into the Aral Sea, back into its original course, when it would flow into the Caspian. The ancient bed is still visible, and a Russian expedition has this year explored it. If the Oxus could be made to resume its old course, two material results would ensue :

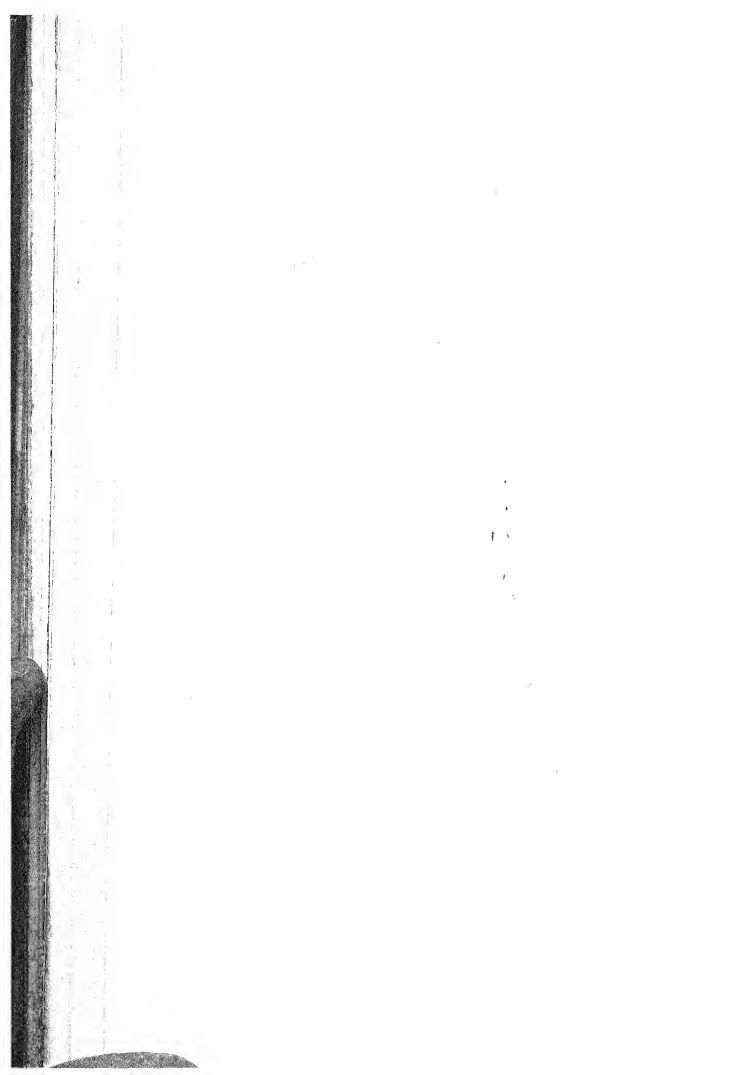
(1) A waterway would be opened from the Caspian into the north-eastern corner of Afghanistan, for the Oxus rises just by Kabul, and flows north.

(2) The great Kara Kum desert would be



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KIRGHIZ WOMEN AND YURT.



changed from a barren plain into a fertile corn-field.

It is not yet known whether the scheme is practicable, but if it could be carried through the benefit to the rulers and inhabitants of the country would be enormous.

The Oxus, a Greek corruption of the Turki word "Aksu," or "white water," was called the Gihon by the Arabs, and believed to be one of the four streams which watered Paradise. It was originally the boundary of Central Asia, and in a way of Northern India, for no good Brahmin could go beyond it without losing caste.

Nowadays Turkestan is the heart of Sunnism, but once it was considered the field of religious disputes. An old proverb says :

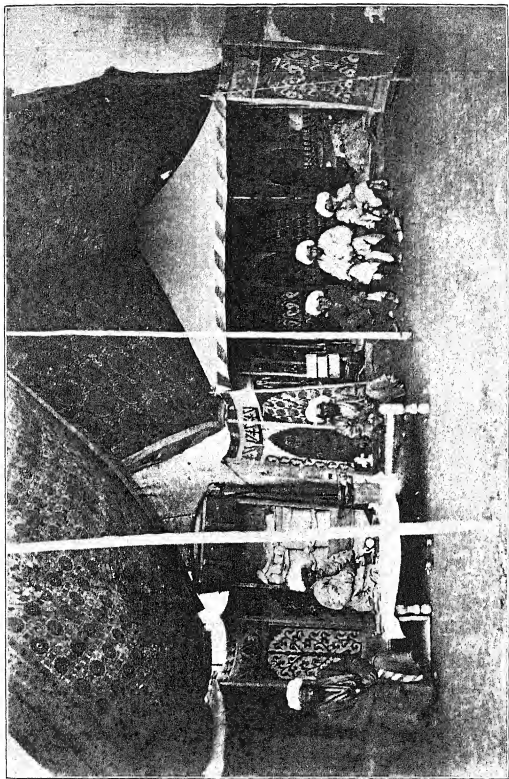
In Roum are blessings, in Cham munificence, in Baghdad science, but in Mavera-el-Nehr (Central Asia) nought but rancour and strife.

The blessings of Constantinople, the munificence of Damascus, and the science of Baghdad are all as illusory now as the religious strife in Turkestan, which is as united a country on religious matters as one could find anywhere.

## CHAPTER II

### TRANSCASPIA AND BOKHARA

I WILL now go back to our arrival at Kaakha, on the Transcaspian Railway. Before we got there we crossed at right angles the old trade route which ran from the Caspian to China along the Hyrcanian slopes. The little village of Kaakha, with its mud huts and few scattered trees, its multitude of muddy irrigating canals, and its Turkoman peasants looked very like the Persia we had just quitted. A closer inspection, however, showed a vast difference. Here the people are as full of enterprise as those in Persia are dull and lifeless. The landscape too was different. Behind us lay the long, snow-capped ridge of mountains which constitute Iran's last and strongest defence, while in front stretched a sandy desert running hundreds of miles to the north, to be finally lost in the flat, desolate swamps near the Aral Sea. All along and close under that mountain barrier runs the line which, starting from Krasnovodsk on the shores of the Caspian, follows a south-easterly direction until it reaches its most southerly point, Kaakha. From here it runs north-east again to Bokhara and



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CARPET BOOTH IN BOKHARA.



Samarkand, which in 1896 was the terminus. But the line is now completed as far as Tashkend, 150 miles further north. The railway is a triumph of strategy, for it commands the whole of the fertile part of Khorasan, and at the same time opens up communication between Russia and her provinces in Central Asia.

Russian schemes are so rapidly developed and pushed forward, that it is not amiss to mention the existing project for connecting the Transcaspiian line with the other trunk systems of the Empire. It is proposed to connect Orenburg with Tashkend by a line following the present post road along the shores of the Aral Sea. This will eventually be continued across the Steppe to Semipalatinsk until it joins the Trans-Siberian Railway at Tomsk. A second branch line is now being made from Samarkand, *viâ* Khokand and Marghilan, to Osh, on the Chinese frontier. A third line is to connect Tashkend and Khokand. At present the first and greatest of these projects only exists on paper, but experience in the case of the Trans-Siberian Railway has shown us that the immensity of an enterprise is no bar in Russia to its rapid achievement. Another work now in progress cannot be passed over. East of Kaakha lies the once great city of Merv. From here a branch is in course of construction to Kushk on the Afghan frontier, which will play an important part in any attempt on India. Finally there is the line to be built round the southern Caspian littoral from Baku, *viâ* Resht, to Chikishlar, already alluded to.



One hundred miles west of Kaakha lies Askabad, the capital of Transcaspia, and the seat of the military Governor-General Kuropatkin. To our great disappointment we missed him, as he had just gone to Moscow for the coronation. Kuropatkin is one of the men who have helped to build up the power of Russia in Central Asia. He was Skobelev's Chief of the Staff, and his cool judgment and clever strategy materially strengthened the effect of his general's brilliant *coups de main*. He had lately been at Teheran, where he had made a great impression.

We were delayed two days at Kaakha through insufficient passports. The authorities at Askabad telegraphed that they knew nothing of us, and we were beginning to think that we should be sent back to the frontier, when a captain of police allowed us to go by train to Dushak where we met Kuropatkin's deputy, who again gave us permission to proceed as far as Samarkand, where he said we should have to state our case to the Governor, Count Rostofzof.

The line is only a single one, and the rolling stock not of the newest make. The carriages have corridors and a wagon restaurant attached. Only three express trains run a week, from Krasnovodsk to Samarkand, and these are always crowded with passengers. The Government officials travel second, the merchants and the better class of peasants, third, and the great mass of Turkoman, Kirghiz and poor Russian labourers, fourth, in carriages like long cattle trucks with flat shelves running along them

on which men, women and children lie huddled up with their baggage.

At midnight we passed Merv, the Margiana of the Greeks, and once one of the four royal cities of Khorasan, but now a heap of dull ruins looking ghastly in the moonlight with the rolling desert behind. The Murghab flowed by black and silent, the Murghab once described as the fairest of all streams. Even Ebn Haukal, the old Arabian geographer, wrote of Merv :

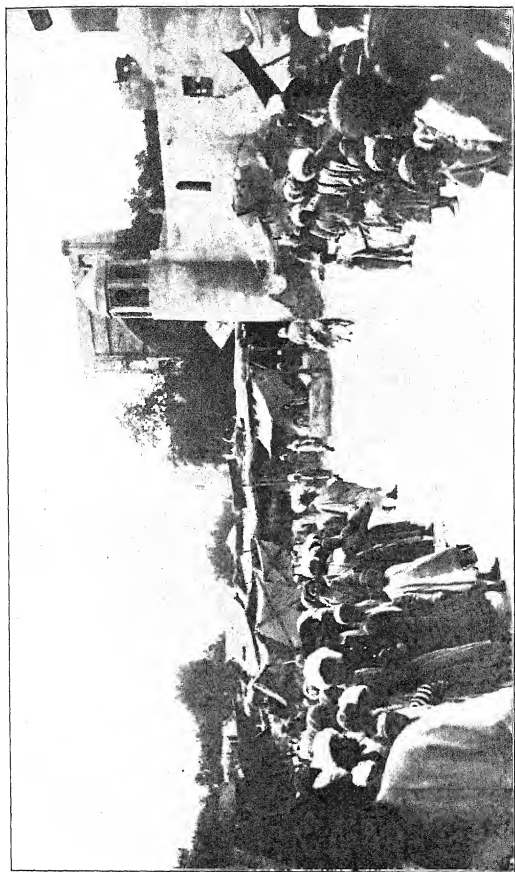
The fruits of Merv are finer than those of any other place, and one cannot see in any other place such palaces with groves and streams and gardens.

Now there are neither palaces nor streams nor gardens, and the city is desolate. Its trade has been transferred to Koushid Khan Kaleh ten miles away, one of the most flourishing modern towns in the province.

During the night we ran through the country of the Tekke and Kara Turkomans, and in the morning reached the fertile belt of land which borders the Oxus, itself the frontier of the protected state of Bokhara. We crossed it by a long wooden bridge built on trestles and very shaky. An iron bridge is contemplated, but the shifting sands of the river banks make the laying of the foundation very difficult. The face of the country changed after we had crossed the Oxus. It was all under cultivation except for a short stretch of sand hills near Karakul. We reached Bokhara soon after this, where we got out of the train.

There are now two Bokharas, the old and the new. Bokhara the Noble will soon become a ruin like Merv, for all the importance centres in the nineteenth century mushroom town which has sprung up with the railway. We drove to the Gosteenitza, or Russian hotel, the only one in the place, and not luxurious by any means. New Bokhara contains besides it and the station, a school, a church, a hospital, a post-office, a few shops, and the Political Agency. In the Agency lives M. Ignatief, the Russian diplomat who advises the Amir of Bokhara much in the same way that our residents "advise" the minor potentates of India. The Amir himself lives in a palace near and supports a household of men and women slaves, leading a life of indolent pleasure, excused by the knowledge that his country is very well governed by the Russians.

Once Bokhara was the most important of the Central Asia Khanates, and although its political power has vanished, it still retains its commercial importance, and is the real centre of trade in Turkestan. Wares from Persia, Afghanistan, China, and Europe all come here, and its silks and fruits are sold in the markets of Delhi, Kabul, and Nijni Novgorod. The inhabitants, Sarts, or Bokhariotes, speak a bastard Persian, but in religion they are pure Sunnis, and even now look to the Sultan in Stambul as their Caliph. The Amir used always to get an investiture from Constantinople as "Reis-i-Din," Guardian of Religion, but the Russian



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BOKHARIOTES.



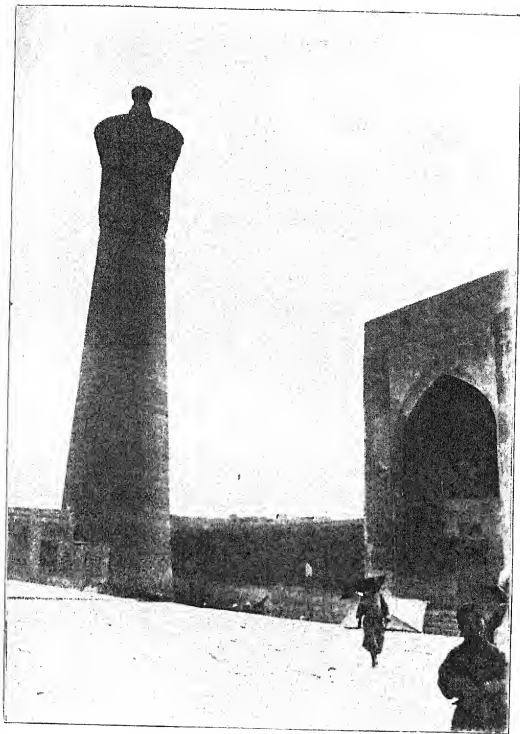
protectorate has stopped that and done much to diminish the importance of Bokhara city, as the Russians are always trying to transfer the trade of the capital to their own town Samarkand. They are doing it in a very summary way by carrying off the waters of the Oxus, which formerly made Bokhara so fruitful and beautiful, to Samarkand. Bokhara is still celebrated for its fruits. "Prunes of Bokhara, and sweet nuts from the fair groves of Samarkand," says Moore, and its silks are rarely bettered out of China.

We drove into old Bokhara the day after our arrival. On the way we met some of the dignitaries riding out on horses or donkeys, in brilliant red and yellow striped silk robes, wearing large white turbans on their heads and sitting on gorgeously embroidered saddle-cloths. Most of them were very handsome, and they were all superbly mounted, the donkeys being pure white and as well bred as the horses. We entered the mud-battlemented wall through a gate in good repair, with a guard of the Amir's soldiers lounging inside. The colours in the bazars were splendid, and the brass pots and pans glittered in the sun. The blue-tiled domes of the mosques and the green waters of the marble washing tanks caught the light and rivalled the silks in their shifting hues.

On all sides one saw queer ugly Mongolian faces beside clear-cut Persian features, which added to the picturesqueness of the scene. All the women were veiled in short blue veils reaching to the waist,

making their reputation of being the loveliest women in the world perfectly safe.

Standing on the steps of the ark, or palace, which was moated, we looked at a scene hot, bright, and moving with a restless life unknown in Europe. Just below us on the right was a wooden cage in which a huge striped tiger was pacing up and down. He was the property of the Amir and had been cooped up there for seven years. We went over the Amir's palace, a large stucco building lavishly decorated inside with rough painting in blue, green, and red. The contrast between the old town and the new struck us forcibly as we went back to our hotel. Next day we left for Samarkand.



MINARET, BOKHARA.

[To face p. 218.]





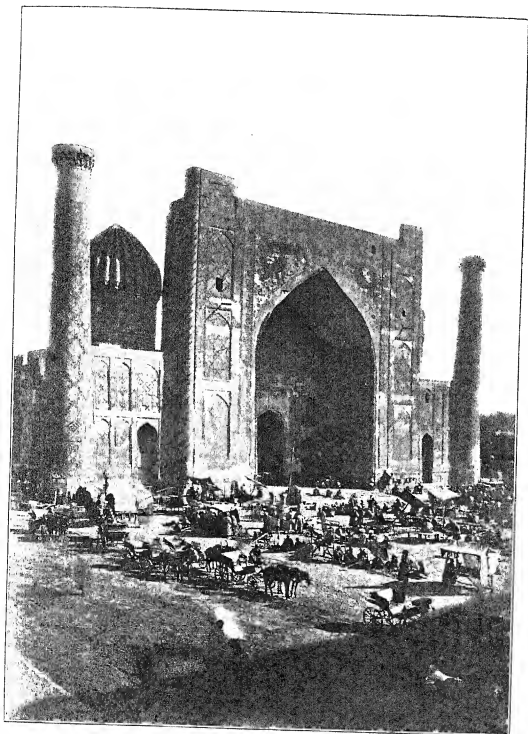
## CHAPTER III

### SAMARKAND

AFTER leaving Bokhara we entered upon a much greener stretch of country than we had yet seen. The Steppe was covered with the luxuriant vegetation which springs up during the rains of April and May only to be withered in the hot suns of June. It was the prettiest time of year, luckily for us, and we saw many beautiful wild flowers. We left the snow-capped ridge of the Kara Tagh range on our right as we approached Samarkand, where we arrived at seven in the evening. As we stepped out of the carriage two police officials politely inquired, "Vasha familia?" (your surname). When we told them, they said that they had been expecting us for some days. There was something a little alarming about these words, so we hastened to present our letters of introduction to the Governor. Count Rostofzof was the Governor, a member of the old Russian nobility, and of course a high Chinovnik as well. The "Chin" is the official hierarchy, divided into various grades, to which every civil and military official belongs. It takes precedence of the old feuda

nobility, for Russia at the present time is essentially a land where bureaucracy rules unchallenged, and if a noble of ancient race does not happen to have won a place in it, he enjoys little prestige.

Count Rostozof spoke English and French perfectly, and his courtesy made our stay in his province exceptionally pleasant. He provided us with a Dragoman to show us Samarkand. This man was a Sart, a Mussulman who had been brought up in the Russian schools, and had taken service in the Administrative Department. He spoke Russian, Persian, and Turki, and knew every one's history from Tamerlane to Skobelev. The city of Samarkand is a very ancient one. Afrosiab, the mythical king of Turan, was its founder, according to legend. In historic times Alexander conquered it, and its palace was the scene of Clitus's murder. Subsequently it became one of the leading cities of the Græco-Bactrian dynasty, until a nomad tribe called the Quetchji seized the kingdom. In 500 A.D. a Nestorian bishop built a cathedral here, and two centuries later the see became a metropolitan. But in 710 the Arabs conquered it, and introduced the faith of Islam. The two religions fought for the mastery until the middle of the thirteenth century, when the older vanished, and since then Samarkand has been a centre of the purest Mohammedanism. Its doctors of law were no less renowned for the severity of their tenets than for the arrogance of their orthodoxy, and to this day "Tawazon i Samar-



GREAT SQUARE, SAMARKAND.

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kandi" (the humility of the Samarkandi) is an ironical proverb. Here the the rival expounders of the Koran, the Ulemas and the Muftis, thronged to split hairs over the meaning of obscure passages. Here Tamerlane was crowned and the great Baber. Then a succession of Uzbek and Chagatai Khans fought for Samarkand for three centuries, and it finally fell under the Russian yoke in 1864. It is now the head of one of the oblasts or provinces of Turkestan. It has always been renowned for its populous and fertile villages. Quintus Curtius Rufus says of it: "*Hinc quarto die ad Maracanda perventum est; Scythiæ confinis est regio habitatusque pluribus ac frequentibus vicis quia ubertas terræ non indigenas modo detinet sed etiam advenas invitat.*"

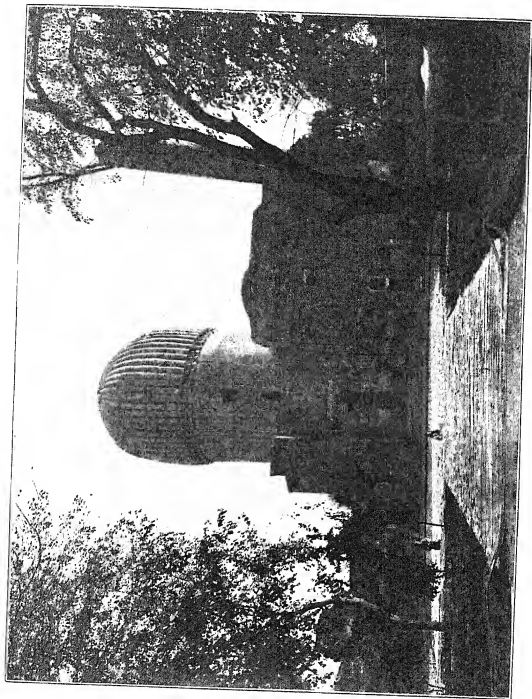
Since its annexation by Russia it has been greatly improved and beautified, and is now an excellent example of a pretty Russo-Tartar town. Long avenues and parks planted with trees, a bright little church, model barracks, a few shops and inns, and native bazars, which are clean and rapidly dwindling. The water of the town is brought from the Zarafshan and the Oxus, and the irrigation works are admirable.

The population consists mainly of Sart Muslims, speaking Tajik or Tartar Persian. They are quiet, well-behaved, ugly people, good Sunnis, and once had the reputation of being both merry and literary:

At the verses of Hafiz of Shiraz the black-eyed Kashmiris and the Turks of Samarkand sing and dance.

Among the historical buildings the most interesting is the Gur Amir, built by Timur the Lame, or Tamerlane, for his mausoleum. He lies buried in a carved black marble sarcophagus, side by side with his grandsons, Jehangir and Uleg Beg. The tomb is neither magnificent nor beautiful, but its associations are enough to make it impressive. Inside lies the lame skeleton of the man who once ruled Asia with a nod, and drove kings—"the pampered jades of Asia" as Marlowe calls them—before his chariot.

The Shah Zende is the most glorious mosque in Asia. It was built by Tamerlane in honour of Zende, who converted Samarkand to Islam. The coloured tiles, the mosaics, the gold traceries, and the wood-carvings are wonderful. Further on is the mosque of Bibi Khanum, now a ruin. Bibi was the daughter of the Emperor of China, and Tamerlane's favourite wife. The mosque was built after her own designs, and no doubt reproduced the glories of Pekin and Canbalu. But the Registan, or Great Square, is the most impressive feature in Samarkand. It is a huge quadrangle, three sides formed by domed and minareted colleges, the fourth by a bazar, which fills the open space in the middle with merchants, camel-drivers and pedlars. Little knots of idle Turks sit there, listening solemnly to itinerant story-tellers or ballad-mongers. The three colleges were once seminaries of learning, but now they are merely caravanserais for the reception of students and pilgrims. Some of the old



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GUR AMIR, OR TOMB OF TAMERLANE, SAMARKAND.





decoration still survives, and is very beautiful. There are frescoes and inscriptions in blue and gold on the walls, fluted pillars and flying arches. As you walk along you see "students" squatting silently before the doors of the little stone cells.

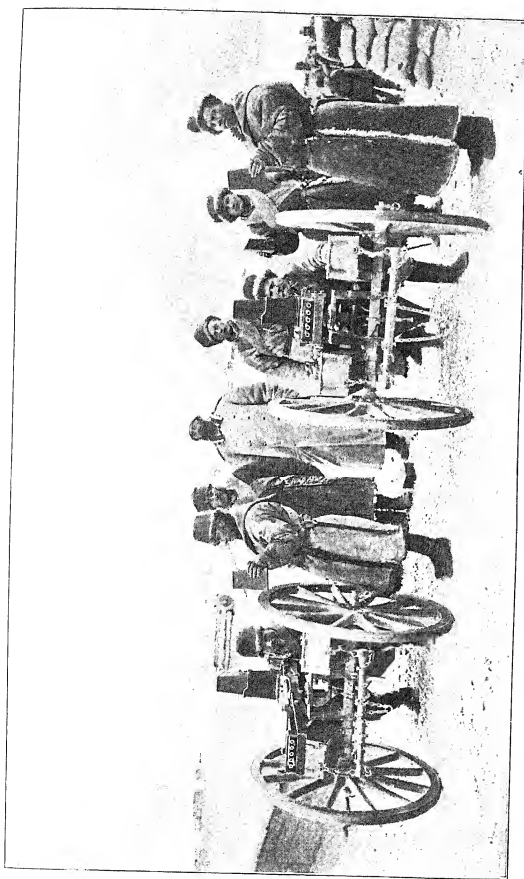
The last thing we saw in Samarkand was the Kok Tash, or large green stone on which Tamerlane was crowned. It stands in the old citadel, and near it is the font into which malefactors' heads were cut off. We did not go to see the tomb of Daniel, as we had already seen one at Dizful, in Persia. This one is very much venerated by the Jews, and is said to grow bigger every year. Many Jews here, by the way, serve in the army—an odd thing, especially in Russia. But the army here is very cosmopolitan. The garrison consists of one brigade of infantry and one regiment of cavalry, making a total of 4000 men. The infantry general had died just before we arrived, and there was a parade on the Sunday to bury him. First came the choir, then the priests with their long flowing hair and purple velvet hats. The coffin followed on a gun-carriage, and behind came the general's charger, hounded to the hoofs in black, while, last of all, were the mourners and firing-party. The whole thing was very well done, but without any touch of personal sorrow.

Before we left Samarkand we laid in fresh stores and hired a tarantass to drive in. The Governor-General provided us with all the needful permits, and we set out on our four hundred mile drive to Osh.

## CHAPTER IV

### THROUGH FERGHANA

POSTING in Russia is a difficult business when one is not used to the ways of the "Starostas" and "Yemshiks," as we were to find out. The Starosta is the postmaster at a station, who is supposed to supply the fresh horses. The Yemshik is the driver, and his speed is in proportion to the number of kopecks he is given. Through Turkestan we tried our Yemshiks with twenty kopecks (fivepence), and we travelled about a hundred miles in every twenty-hour hours. In Siberia we used to give forty, and we covered a hundred and seventy miles in the same time. It may be as well to give a few posting terms before going on with an account of our journey. A "troika" is a cart or sleigh drawn by three horses. One is harnessed between the shafts, with a large semicircular yoke over his withers, on which bells are hung. The other two are traced on either side. They generally go at an easy gallop, and can do the ordinary sixteen mile stage in an hour and ten minutes. There are two sorts of cart in use, the tarantass and the perekladnoi. A tarantass is a



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PAMIR POST.



strongly-built oblong basket fixed on long poles, set lengthwise ; below these poles are the four wheels, the front and back axletrees being joined by a third stout pole that runs along under the centre, and parallel with the other two. There are no springs. The back part is covered in and the front is left open, but an apron can be put up from the driver's seat in front to the roof, and if it is not in holes affords some protection from the rain. At the back is a ledge where a certain amount of baggage can be roped on. A tarantass is a private vehicle, and has to be engaged for a whole journey. The perecladnoi belongs to the post ; it is rougher and more uncomfortable than a tarantass, but it has its advantages. One's tarantass may break down, and then it has to be abandoned or mended. But the perecladnoi, as it only goes one stage, is not so likely to come to grief, and it is much lighter and goes faster. The great secret of getting along quickly, however, is never to delay at a "stanzie," or posthouse. If the Starosta thinks the traveller is going to sleep or dine there he takes things easily, and does not bestir himself about the fresh horses. Then, while one is having an hour's sleep, the last troikas may be taken by the post or a courier. The only plan is to have the fresh horses put in at once, and never stop to sleep. Experienced Russian travellers sleep and eat in the tarantass without the slightest difficulty, but we never quite mastered the art. Another obstacle in the way of the traveller is that any Imperial servant armed with a "Padarojna," or official permit,

takes precedence of other travellers. We had a taste of this at the first stage out of Samarkand. There was only one troika at the stanzie, and just as it was being led out and harnessed to our tarantass, a vehicle galloped up containing an officer, who took our horses without much apology, and left us chafing at the enforced delay for another three hours.

In the Steppe we ourselves had a document which acted like a charm at the different stanziess. The forty kopeck recipe, too, is not to be despised. The stanzie is generally a clean little wooden lodge, with its name and the distances to the two stages painted up outside. Inside are two or three rooms, one of them spotlessly clean, with some chairs, a table, a screen with a couch behind it, and a coloured print of the Emperor on the wall. We always met with civility and hospitality from the Starostas and their wives, who can generally cook a "shelenka," a sort of omelette, and make soup.

It took us five days to get to Osh, but we halted at Khojend, Khokand, and Marghilan. The roads, too, were heavy, and the rain never ceased. In the winter the going is easier, for the wheels of the tarantass are taken off and it is converted into a sledge; 200 miles in a day and a night is then the average of speed. But the cold is intense, and one runs the risk of being snowed up for days together.

We left Samarkand on April 30th, unaccompanied by any servant, as we were travelling light. The first part of the way lay through green fields, irrigated by the Zarafshan, and the other streams which

come down from the snows of the great Turkestan range. The peaks of this chain rise to 18,000 and 20,000 feet; we skirted its northern slopes all the way, following the fertile Ferghana valley, until at Osh we found ourselves hemmed in by the immense barriers of the Alai and Tian Shan mountains, which had to be crossed before we could get into China.

We drove across the Zarafshan, guided through the ford by a waiting Uzbek, and then through the Kara Tau hills by the gates of Tamerlane, as a rocky defile with inscriptions of Uleg Beg's cut on the face of the rock, is called. At Jizak we left the main road to Tashkend, and turned into the oblast of Ferghana, where the country was more deserted and the roads very bad. With the Syr Daria river we got into more cultivated land again. This immense waterway rises in the Tian Shan mountains, and flows west and north until it discharges its waters into the Aral Sea. During the last part of its 1000 mile course it is navigable, but as it is ice-bound for four months in the year, it is never likely to become of great importance. We skirted its left bank until we arrived at Khojend, a clean, well-lighted town in the middle of green gardens, and a cultivated country. At Khokand we stayed the night. The word means 'Boartown,' and pig are still plentiful in the covers which surround the city. It was formerly the capital of the ancient Khanate of Khokand, and was annexed by Skobelev in 1876. Cotton, silk, grain, and rice are the chief industries. Nearly all the paper in

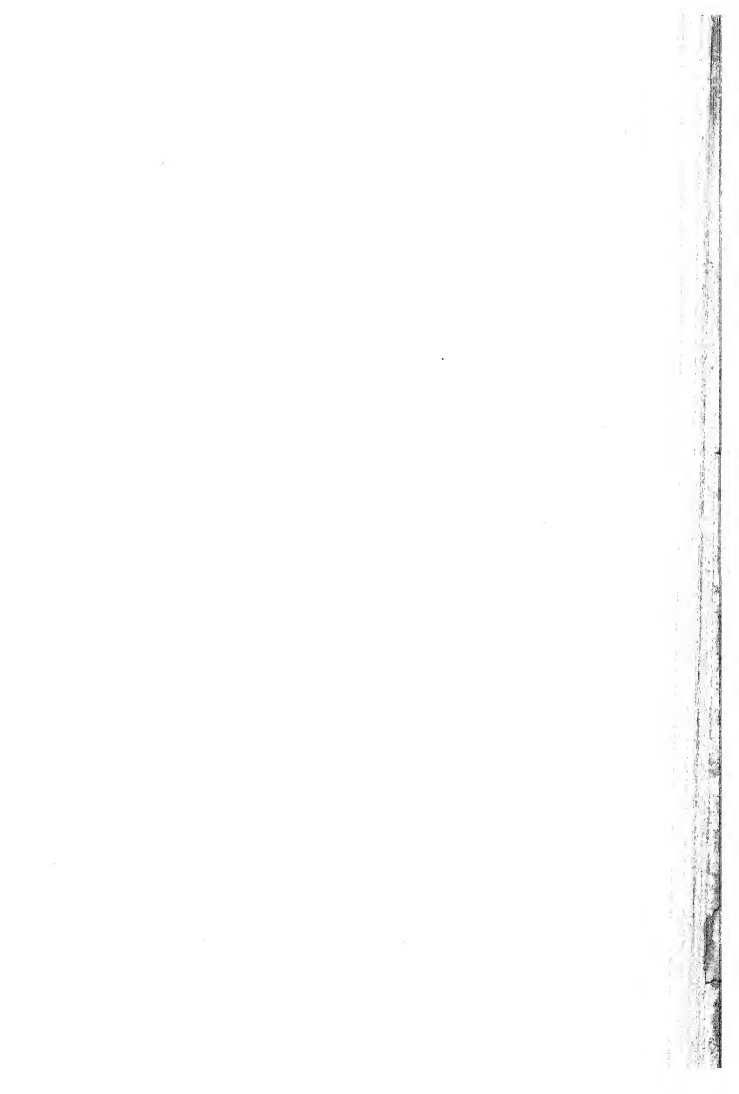


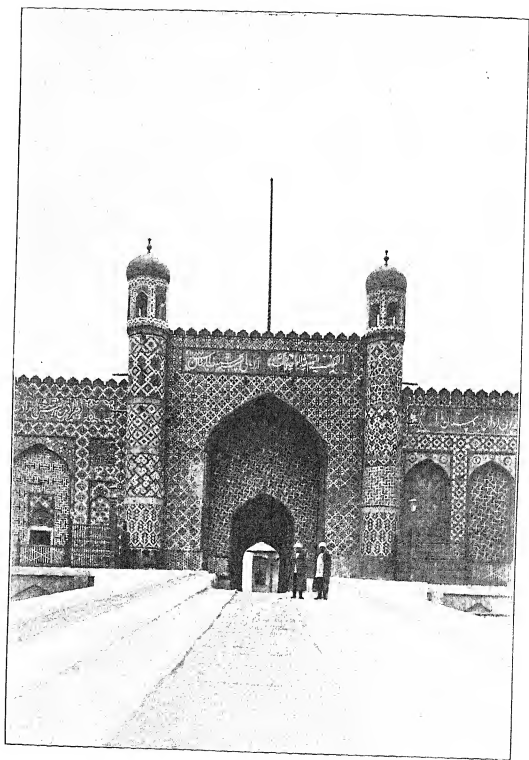
Central Asia is made from rice in Khokand. The population is about 100,000, of which at least 25 per cent. suffer from goitre. But for this deformity the people are good-looking in their yellow Mongolian way.

The finest building is the Amir's palace or citadel. It is in good repair, and the façade, approached by a sloping stone ramp, is gorgeously enamelled in blue and green. The tiling of the dome and the paintings on the minarets are also very picturesque, and are thrown into relief by the whitewashed barracks. There are two pretty mosques, and a fine square in which stand the palace, the posthouse, and a small gosteenitza or hotel. The town was once called "the delightful," and in some ways it still deserves the title. The people dress in bright clothes, the Sarts chiefly in red, and the children stick red or yellow flowers behind their ears, which gives an odd look to their little wizened faces. The gardens of the town are full of mulberry trees, for the silkworms, and the whole place with its eastern picturesqueness and Russian improvements affords a pleasing contrast to Marghilan, our next halting place.

Marghilan is nothing but a cantonment, very tidy and very dull. The garrison consists of five battalions and three field batteries, beside a regiment of cavalry. We dined at a little gosteenitza, and then drove without a halt to Andijan. On May 5th we reached Osh.

Osh claims to be the ancient Alexandreschata, the





PALACE OF AMIR AT KHOKAND.

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eastern limit of the mightiest march on record, and tradition says that here Bacchus, Hercules, Semiramis, and Cyrus, all built altars and offered sacrifices. The following passage from Pliny is interesting :

Ultra Sogdiana oppidum Tarada et in ultimis eorum finibus Alexandria ab Alexandro Magno condita. Finis omnium eorum dictus ab illa parte terrarum : includente flumine Jaxarte quod Scythiæ Silui vocant.

It is easily understood how a general would be baffled by the barrier of mountains on the east, north, and south. Probably the tracks over them now are very much what they were in Alexander's day : difficult enough for a small caravan, and impossible for a large army.

The town of Osh lies under a great ridge of rock called the Throne of Solomon, on the top of which stands a little shrine. We climbed up to see it, and got a magnificent view of the two fertile valleys beneath. At the top of the rock there are two little round holes about the size of a man's head. If a pious Mussulman suffers from headache he comes here and prays, and afterwards puts his head in the hole. Then he deposits some bread or a coin in it, which is at once seized by the attendant at the shrine, and goes away content with his cure.

There is another custom in connection with the shrine, which is worth mentioning. Close by it is a sloping ledge of rock about ten feet long and four inches broad. The ladies of Osh who have not been blessed with any offspring come here and slide

down the ledge, paying heavily for this supposed cure of sterility.

The people of Osh are now entirely under the thumb of the Russians. Like Indians, they dismount and salaam to the ground at the approach of an officer, a necessary rule in a country where outward and visible signs count for so much.

We dined one night with the colonel commanding the district, a level-headed man who had been promoted from the ranks. He had but a poor opinion of the Afghan troops, saying it would take little to make them mutiny against their officers and shoot their allies. He had served in the Pamirs, and was perhaps qualified to judge of them. His daughter had a snow-white leopard for a pet, which, although it was only a year old, was evidently beginning to grow dangerous.

The colonel and his officers were most kind to us, and gave us valuable information about our journey over the mountains. Their skill in topography was wonderful; every water-parting, every height, and every stream was carefully surveyed and set down, and their ordnance maps were the best I have ever seen.

We hired a caravan to take us to Kashgar, and left Osh on May 9th.

## CHAPTER V

### ACROSS THE ALAI INTO CHINA

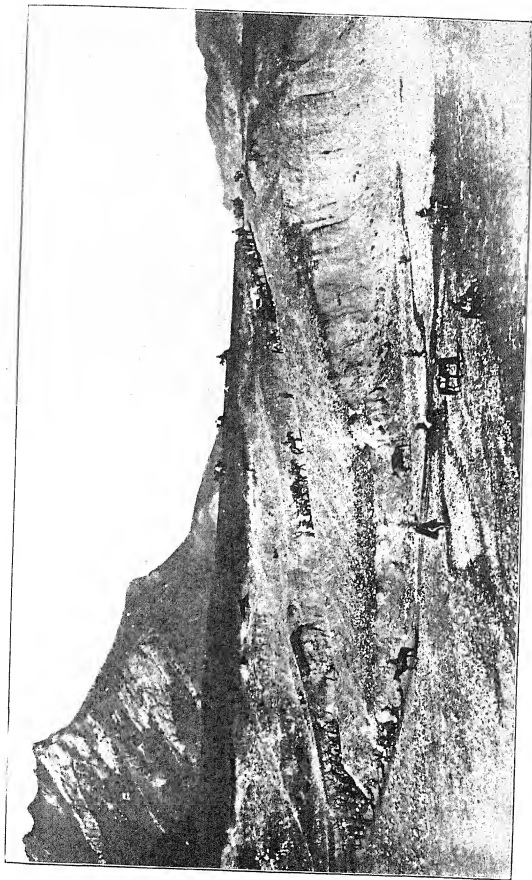
THE country we were now entering is in many ways the most interesting in the world. The Pamir plateau is the starting-point of the great mountain systems which separate the various branches of the human race in Asia. From the north-western corner run the Turkestan and Paropamismus ranges, which merge into the Elburz and Caucasus, and so join the European system. From the south-west start the Hindu Kush and Suleiman chains, which follow the Indus and eventually lose themselves in the deserts of Beluchistan and the Indian Ocean. On the south-east are the Karakoram and Kuen Lun mountains, which join the Himalayas, and on the north-east stretch the Alai and Tian Shan ranges, which divide the Steppes of Siberia from the desert of Gobi. Thus is Asia divided into four great massifs, which are inhabited by four distinct types of humanity. To the east lie the yellow or Chinese peoples, to the south were the blacks, ancient Indian tribes now almost extinct. On the west sprang the mighty Indo-European race which has spread all over

Europe, and has merged with the Turko-Mongolian or Finnish family that lay to the north. The Pamir plateau is, then, called the cradle of the human race with apparent justification. The word Pamir means in Persian "roof of the world." It has an area of about 30,000 square miles and an average altitude of 15,500 feet, or the height of Mont Blanc. There are a few Kirghiz nomads on its lower slopes, who live by hunting ibex and wild sheep. In old times they were the subjects of the Khan of Khokand, now they are nominally subject to the "Pamirski Post," the Amir of Bokhara, but their real master is the Tsar, and fifty Russian soldiers are quartered near the Kizil Art Pass.

The lowest passes of the surrounding chains reach a height of 12,000 feet, and the loftiest peaks are over 26,000. M. Blanc, in his *Voyage en Asie Centrale*, says: "Dans cette région de montagnes gigantesques, près desquelles les Alpes ne sont pour ainsi dire que de simples collines, un col de 12,000 pieds est relativement très peu élevé."

By the side of the colossal heights of the Pamirs and the Sarikol, it is quite true that a pass like the Terek Daran or the Kizil Art is nothing, although in Europe it would be a lofty mountain. The plain itself is barren and snow-bound. Marco Polo crossed it on his way from Badakshan to Samarkand in the year 1274, and writes the following description:

The plain is called Pamir, and you ride across it for twelve days together, finding nothing but a desert without habitation or any green thing, so that travellers are obliged to carry with them



IN THE PAMIRS.

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whatever they need of; north-east you travel forty days over mountain and wilderness, and you find no green thing. The people are savage idolaters, clothing themselves in the skins of beasts; they are in truth an evil race.

Then he goes on to describe the wonderful wild sheep with curling horns, called after him "oves poli," now eagerly sought by sportsmen. Tradition surrounds the Pamir with many a weird legend, and ancient Chinese geographers relate that their ancestors came down in the old time from the west, the Celestial Mountains and the Lake of Dragons. The latter is identified with the Black Lake, or Karakul, which lies south of the Kizil Art Pass, and the Tian Shan Peaks are the Celestial Mountains. Chinese history bears out this migration from west to east, and biblical geographers say they are the yellow race, the race of Cain, which came down the river Tarim. The Pamir is the supposed site of the Garden of Eden, and the word "Alai" means Paradise in Kirghiz. The analogy between this country and that described in the Bible is indeed remarkable.

The verses in Genesis ii. beginning :—

*Optimum est; ibi invenitur Vdellium et lapis onychinus,*

are explained by Blanc as follows :

La fleuve Phison serait ainsi le Tarim, dans le bassin duquel sont bien des mystérieux gisemens, non seulement d'onyx mais aussi de jade, de pierre de lune, et de pierre de corne, trois minéraux qui ne se rencontrent guère que là, et qui encore aujourd'hui sont considérés dans tout l'orient comme ayant des vertus cabalistiques et une valeur considérable.

Gold mines certainly do exist both in the Altyn Tagh and Kuen Lun ranges. The other rivers of Eden are identified as follows : the Oxus as the Gihon, the Jaxartes, the Sihon, and a fourth river which rose in the Karakul, but is now dried up, as the Euphrates.

The ethnological importance of the Pamir, whether it is the site of the Garden of Eden or not, is beyond dispute. Politically it has little importance. The climb from Ferghana by the Kizil Art is impossible from October to June, and even were this a more practicable route, there is only one pass down to India by which artillery could possibly proceed. This is the Baroghil, and it is hardly conceivable that a modern army could face the Pamirs, and then be in a fit condition to meet the wild tribes of Kafiristan the other side. At Osh we saw a good deal of a young captain who had been quartered a year at the Pamir post, and he gave his opinion of the country in these words :

*C'est un pays miserable qui ne vaut pas la peine de posséder ; toujours la neige, le froid, et un vent qui vous coupe la gorge, et pour tout habitant quelques Kirghiz, bêtes et sauvages.*

Our way lay along the Pamir road as far as Sufi Kurgan, where we were to strike across the Alai and Tian Shan chains at the point where they join. This would bring us down to the frontier fort of Irkestan. From there we should go out of Russian territory and soon arrive at Kashgar.

Kashgar and Osh are practically at the same

altitude, 5000 feet, but in between lies an immense mountain wall. Beyond Kashgar is the great Tarim basin, forming the western section of the plateau which the Chinese geographers call the Hanhai, or Dried-up Sea. This vast sandy plain is enclosed by huge mountains, from the highlands of which rise the springs which flow away to Lob Nor and the east.

After Sufi Kurgan, where we left the Pamir road, we found ourselves in a wild rocky country, desolate but for a few Kirghiz and hundreds of whistling marmots. These little animals sat in front of their holes until we were close upon them, when they turned suddenly and bolted into the earth. As we ascended, the air became cooler and more rarefied. Fast walking was a great strain, and running impossible after a few yards. Sometimes our track lay across a snowdrift at least 300 feet high, which was quite hard, although the stream beneath was still running. At 11,000 feet we reached the regular snow line, and everything was dazzling white. We were all a little done up when we started up the last *arête*. The ascent was very steep, and the track, scarcely eighteen inches wide, the only safe foothold. The view from the summit, which our aneroid registered as 14,500 feet, was the most glorious thing I have ever seen. Stretching away to the south were the great peaks of the Alai and the Pamir, and beyond them we could distinguish Kizil Agyn and Kaufman, which rise to 22,000 and 23,000 feet respectively. Everything

was a glittering white except our caravan, a mile away, looking like a line of little black insects, and two immense ice crags on either side of us which shone like silver. Nothing living was in sight, except seven hideous vultures feeding on the entrails of dead horses.

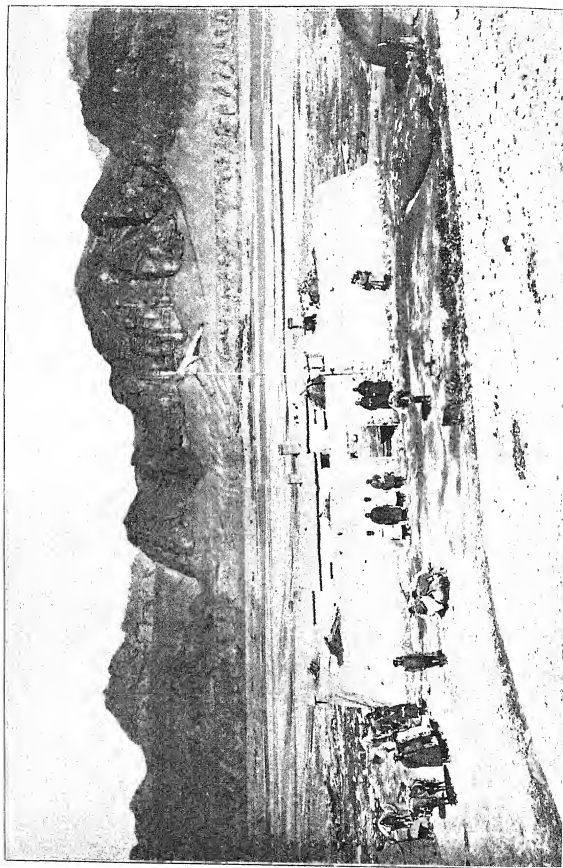
On the descent the snow grew soft, and we had difficulty in getting along. The track was strewn with bales of goods, which caravan drivers had been obliged to leave behind to lighten their mules' loads. We struggled on till sundown, when the snow began to freeze again into verglas, and we were forced to pitch our tent. It was bitterly cold in the night, but the horses were well wrapped up and did not seem to suffer much, although we ourselves bled a good deal at the nose.

Another day took us over two more cols, and then we came across the Kirghiz and their sheep again. There was much less vegetation here than on the northern slopes, and the scenery was not as beautiful. We left the ironstone and got into a sandstone stratum at the bed of the Tarim, which divides the Alai from the Trans-Alai groups. The banks are about 200 feet high, and the bed over half a mile wide, and covered with snow. The river itself was running swiftly in four channels, each nearly thirty feet broad. We forded these and climbed the opposite cliff, on which is built the frontier fort of Irkestan. Here we dined with the lieutenant and the douanier, and their respective wives. These four, with fifty troopers and a few



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KIRGHIZ ON YAK.



CUSTOM HOUSE AT IRKESTAN.

Kirghiz, make up the entire population of this isolated little post. From the Persian frontier to here we had travelled over 1000 miles, which had taken twenty-four days, including stoppages. The Chinese frontier post, an old wooden board with celestial characters inscribed on it, was stuck up on the hill just above Irkestan, so soon after our start the next morning we found ourselves in the Middle Empire. The country was dreary and deserted, giving one a curious out-of-the-world sensation. We rode thirty miles from the frontier signboard before we came to Ulukchat, the frontier town. It is a mud-walled redoubt, some thirty yards square, defended by a ditch and palisade, and over the gate the peculiar pent-house construction characteristic of China. Round the fort were grouped twenty or thirty Kirghiz huts and yurts. We rode up to the gate and asked a peasant for the Governor. He went inside, and came back presently with a Chinaman dressed in a plum-coloured silk jacket, and black velvet trousers tucked into pointed shoes. He began a speech to us in Chinese, which sounded as if he were chanting, but we cut him short by producing our passports from Peking. Their effect was immediate. The Chinaman brought out several compatriots to look at them, and a hut was cleared out for our use. The soldiers were playing a game like quoits with some Kirghiz in the village square, and they all seemed on the best of terms.

We left the next day and kept along the bank of the Tarim through camel-thorn and brushwood,



passing a few yurts, and now and then a Cossack riding with despatches from the Russian Consul-General at Kashgar to the authorities at Osh. The weather became very hot, and we pressed on as fast as we could through passages in sandstone cliffs, which were very monotonous. At night we slept in yurts, as the Kirghiz tents are called, and watched children of four and five milking the sheep. The sheep are big and strong, and can knock over one child easily, so the milkers carry the day by telling off one of their number to hang round the sheeps' necks while the operation is being performed. The Chinese soldiers we met on the road looked at our saddles and stirrup-leathers with great interest. Their own saddles are made of wood, and their leathers of rope, but in spite of these disadvantages they ride very well.

As we neared Kashgar we came to gardens of cloves and mulberries, which smelt sweetly a long way off. We arrived there the fifth day after passing the frontier.

## CHAPTER VI

### KASHGAR

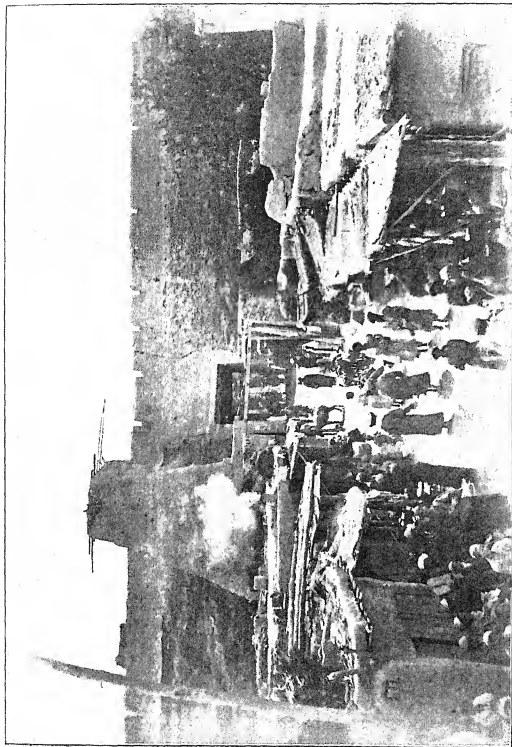
THERE are two Kashgars, the old and the new. In the old town live the Chinese Governor and the civil officials, but the majority of the inhabitants are Turki-Mohammedans. Outside the walls are the Russian Consulate-General and the house of Mr. Macartney, the agent of the Viceroy of India. Mr. Macartney was away on leave when we were at Kashgar, but his secretary, a Punjabi named Munshi Ahmed Din, very kindly entertained us.

The Yangi Sheyr, or new city, is about five miles from the old, and is entirely Chinese. It contains the barracks, and some shops, besides the palace where the military Commander of the province lives. Like the civil Governor in the old city, he receives his orders direct from Pekin, so that the relations between the two are rather strained. At the time we were there the political position was complicated by a revolt at Lob Nor, and the insurgents were reported to be advancing on Kashgar ; however, we never saw them.

The history of Kashgar is not particularly in-

teresting. The earliest records date back to the time of the Han dynasty, and it was probably the Kasia Regia to which Ptolemy alludes as in "the country of Scythia beyond the Imaus." In the tenth century Islam became the faith of the Tartars, and although it received a severe check from Jenghis Khan's invasion, it has always remained the dominant religion of the country. The natives are a religious, moral people, and by no means bigoted. They are Sunnis, looking upon the Sultan as their lawful Caliph. They know nothing of him except that he lives "at Stambul in Rum," but they vaguely connect him with the glory of the ancient Roman empire, and respect him accordingly.

In 1862 Kashgar, which had fallen into the hands of the Chinese after the decay of Tamerlane's successors, became an independent kingdom. The Tungani tribes and Mohammedan Tartars rose under Yakub Beg and Buzurg Khan, turned out their oppressors, and established an autonomous state under Yakub. Embassies were sent to Calcutta and Constantinople, and in return Yakub Beg received a firman from the Sultan with the title of Amir el Mumminim and a license to offer up public prayer in the mosques. Emissaries from India and from Russia also acknowledged Yakub as King of Kashgaria. But unluckily he was murdered in 1876, after having governed wisely for fourteen years. His sons quarrelled about the succession, and the Chinese regained possession, and have been established in Kashgar for more than twenty years. They are



BAZAAR OUTSIDE KASIGAR.

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detested by the natives as pagan oppressors, and there are constant rebellions, which necessitate the presence of a force of 3000 Chinese soldiers in the province. The influence of Russia is powerful, and the Chinese tremble before it. The native population, knowing how well their brothers in Ferghana and Siberia are governed by the Russians, look upon them as their natural protectors, and the Russian Consul-General is called "le roi de Kashgar" by his friends, with some justification. He has a good house with barracks attached containing forty Cossacks. It is a pity that Mr. Macartney has not a more definite official position, as he could do much more for British trade than now as a private agent.

Kashgaria, or Sin Chiang, is by no means a fertile country. It is said that the desert encroaches year by year, and the unsettled state of affairs prevents the people from taking much pains about the cultivation of the land. The province stretches from Russia and Dzungaria on the north to Kashmir on the south, and the east is bounded by the desert of Gobi and the mountains of Tibet. The population is over two millions, but of these only 5000 are Chinese, the rest being Kirghiz, Turkis, Tunganis, and Mongols. The city of Kashgar is at least 2000 miles from Peking, and it takes fast couriers eight days to ride to the capital. It is said that a message can be flashed by beacons in twenty-four hours, but the statement is open to doubt.

Our first duty in Kashgar was to call on

M. Petrovsky, the Russian Consul-General. He received us politely, and advised our going to India *via* Gilgit, and not up to Narin, as he said we should have trouble in getting horses and that the road over the mountains was very bad. This was true, but, on the other hand, the Karakoram Pass was not yet open, and the Gilgit road was very long and difficult. Also the Indian Government strongly objects to private travellers monopolising the porters and yaks on this route during the few months it is passable, as all the service is required to get the supplies up to the Gilgit garrison. Besides this we had made our plans to drive across the Russian Steppe, and strike the new railway at Omsk, so we disregarded M. Petrovsky's advice. Our next visit was to the Chinese Governor, who had sent to say he would receive us, and had prepared quite a function. The outside of the Yamen or palace was daubed with brightly coloured dragons, giants and demons. As we dismounted, the doors were flung open, and we saw in front of us a triple colonnade. At the end of this were more doors and more dragons. Half way up the colonnade these doors also burst open as if by magic, and out came the Taiotai at a fast walk, dressed in gorgeous clothes, and holding out his hands in welcome. After a great many Chinese greetings, we were ushered into a reception room by an official holding high above his head two immense vermilion visiting cards, inscribed with our name in Chinese character. We were led into a long salon, and were then put upon a sort of

throne, and offered diminutive cups of tea and sweets, while the Taiotai and his staff sat down, and paid us compliments.

The Taiotai drank a little tea, taking whiffs meanwhile from his silver opium pipe, and then made an oration in Chinese. When he had finished, his interpreter rose and painfully translated it into Turki, a language which resembles Ottoman Turkish about as much as French does Italian. Ahmed Din, Macartney's secretary, then proceeded to re-translate into English, the result being this sort of thing :

"His Excellency the Taiotai says that the pleasure and honour conferred on him by the visit of your Excellencies is the only ray of sunshine that has visited Kashgar since Macartney Sahib left. He begs pardon for his miserable little house (it was about the size of St. James's Palace), his few servants (there were fifty at least in the room), the poor clothes they are dressed in (every one was in silk or velvet), and the wretched tea you are drinking (it was the best tea we had ever tasted), but he hopes that he may go on basking in the light of your presence for four hours more. I should advise you to say that the house, the servants, their clothes and the tea, are better, more splendid and delicious than anything in any place in the world, and that though nothing would give you greater pleasure than to stay eight hours in the Taiotai's company, such being in fact the only object of your journey from London, yet you will be in sorrow compelled to



tear yourselves away in a few minutes, knowing how loaded and oppressed he is with state business and how dull and illiterate your own conversation is."

This took Ahmed about two minutes to say in English, and our answer was, "All right, say that," which sentence was instantly expanded into about four hundred Turki and Chinese words.

The visit was entirely confined to compliments, and the Taiotai announced that he would come and visit us the next morning. He also pressed us to dine, but having read Lord Dunmore's account of his last dinner there, which consisted of thirty odd courses and lasted five hours, we excused ourselves. It took us some time to get out of the palace, as the Taiotai insisted on escorting us through the many doors, and at each we had to stop, and say through the two interpreters that we begged him to go back, that he had already come far enough, and that we knew he was burdened with the despatch of business. The answer was, that it was true he had great business to transact, but our importance and the delight of our conversation were more to him than the affairs of the entire Chinese Empire. At last we got to our horses, but here was more delay, as the Taiotai insisted on holding our stirrups, a courtesy which required more extravagant compliments. We rode off to see another Chinese official, Chang Delai, the chief Director of the Foreign Imperial Board of Commerce. Then we went back to Macartney's house through the old city, which was

built by Mirza Abubekr in 1514. It lies on the high ground overlooking the Tuman river, and has mud battlements. There are only two gates, and the bazars inside are crowded, and full of traffic. The Kashgaris seemed plain honest folk, not as polished as the Shirazis, nor as gorgeous as the Bokhariotes, but hospitable and pleasant. There are a few Hindus in the place, all money-lenders, and very much despised. Otherwise the inhabitants are Turki, Russian and Chinese. The goods are mostly Russian and Chinese, but the best Chinese silks and embroideries are sold in the new town.

An odd old Dutch Catholic priest, who had lived ten years in Kashgar, came to see us soon after our return that day. He talked eight languages fluently, and was a clever and enthusiastic missionary, but he had never made a single convert. He was not in the least down-hearted, although he was quite penniless, and lived on the charity of the few Europeans who came to Kashgar. He was very good in taking us to see things, among others the shrine of Hazret Afak, said to be the richest religious foundation in Turkestan. The saint was also a king, and lived at the end of the seventeenth century. The shrine included a monastery, a mosque, and a mausoleum. It was clean and well kept, and surrounded by a garden of silver poplars with lakes in it. The remarkable thing about the foundation is that it is maintained and protected by the Chinese, not by the Muslims.

The next morning we heard from M. Petrovsky of the Shah's assassination. At the same time the Taiotai came to call on us. The order of his procession was as follows : two men carrying yellow banners, two men beating gongs, a caparisoned led horse, two men in red with long sticks, a red umbrella borne by an official dressed in green silk, an equerry in blue, three attendants carrying red and yellow flags, the Taiotai's state go-cart drawn by a white horse, three interpreters, the chief pipe bearer, five Chinese soldiers riding.

The Taiotai's clothes were splendid—a grey silk jacket, a plum-coloured skirt, and a stomacher blazing with jewels. He wore several orders, one of them denoting that he had performed some act of valour, and sat and talked a long time, displaying by the way the most astounding ignorance. Neither he nor any of his people had ever heard of Persia, only a thousand miles away. He also declared that it was untrue that China had been beaten in the recent war with Japan, and said that foolish people had spread an incorrect report in Europe.

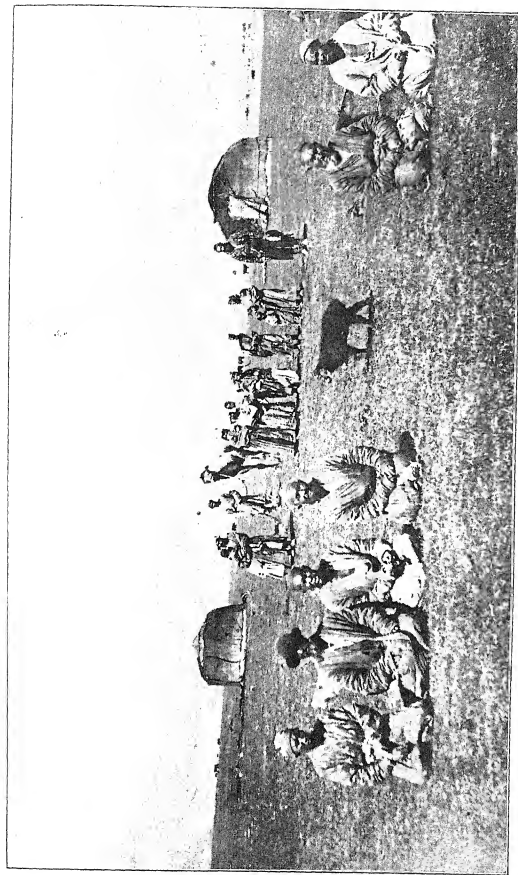
When he had gone we hired two palanquins and drove to the new town. The place was full of ruffianly-looking Chinese soldiers, dressed in very smart clothes and well mounted. The barracks we were not allowed to see, but we went into a small temple of Buddha, and saw a collection of idols which reminded one of a waxwork show. Next door there was a school of naked children. We bought a few silks and brocades, and were regaled

with tea and cakes. Ahmed Din had meanwhile secured us a caravan to take us to Narin across the Russian frontier, whence we could take the post; and next day we started on our last and most adventurous caravan journey.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TIAN SHAN MOUNTAINS

ALL the time we were in Kashgar a thick mist hung over the town. This was caused by a snow-fall on the Tian Shan, which was to affect us more directly later on. Our road lay due north, only 150 miles as the crow flies. But before us rose two immense mountain barriers, between which lay a plateau fifty miles in breadth. To reach this plateau, and again to leave it, we had to climb two arduous passes. There were two roads, the easterly one by the Terekty and Bogusty passes, and the westerly by the Turugat and Tashrabut. No caravan had been either way for some time, but the western rivers were said to be in flood; and on the second day we met some Kirghiz who told us that the Terekty pass could still be traversed, as they had just been there after some "akkar" or female oves poli. We had already rather inclined to this way, as it was a day's march shorter than the other, and the report of the Kirghiz decided us. Really we ought to have waited for some more dependable



KIRGHISE.

[To face page 248.]

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the addresses are given below each name. The list includes the names of the members of the committee, the names of the members of the sub-committee, and the names of the members of the advisory committee. The addresses are given in the following order: the address of the member of the committee, the address of the member of the sub-committee, and the address of the member of the advisory committee.

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information, but we took it for granted that the difficulties would be no greater than those we had met with in crossing the Alai. As it was, we got separated on the plateau at the worst time of year, when the rivers are swollen, and the snow liquefying ; and were lost for a week, and nearly starved before we reached Narin.

Soon after leaving Kashgar we crossed the Tuman river, and leaving the gardens and cultivated land behind, came to a broad stony plain. After fording another river, where there were some remarkable rock caves cut high up in the overhanging cliffs, we came to the village where the easterly route branched off from the Chadir Kul road. Here a courteous Celestial put an enormous vermilion stamp on the back of our passports, and we got rid of our Uzbeg servant who had developed a trick of drinking our brandy inconveniently often. Instead we engaged a Kashgari, called Ismail, who was honest, though a little slow. The caravan was a small one, consisting of only five horses, for we had left all but absolute necessities with Ahmed Lin to be sent home *via* India, as soon as the Karakoram Pass was open. Narin, we knew, was the terminus of a post road, and we hoped that by driving hard from there we might reach Semipalatinsk on the Irtysh river in ten days. We were absolutely forced to travel quickly, because we had come to an end of our stores, and had not been able to stock much that was of use in Kashgar. Beyond the first pass we knew we should not come



upon any Kirghiz, so we could not depend upon getting anything to eat by the road.

On May 24th, our second day's march, we crossed another stony plain, and got into the sand-hill region, where we came to a mud fort. It was little more than a gateway, and was garrisoned by two Kirghiz who gave us directions as to the road. They told us that we should find another fort "deurt sa' at dan sora" (four hours on), which meant in about twelve miles. A sa'at, as in Turkey, is the distance a loaded mule can cover in an hour, like a farsakh in Persia. As a matter of fact we rode nearly twenty miles before we came to the other fort. There were some yurts below it, and in one of them Ismail and the chavadar were taken in, while we slept in our tent. The next day Labouchere went into the mountains with one of the Kirghiz to stalk some oves poli which had been seen the day before. I went after some "akkar" to the left, the caravan following. We had bought a small lamb for a rouble, and on that we had to live for five days. Labouchere had with him the leg of a sheep, and when that was finished he lived on "gulcha" (ovis poli), which tastes like horseflesh. He was to have joined me on the evening of the same day he went on his expedition, but we never met again until Narin.

Labouchere and his Kirghiz set out east at dawn, and sighted and shot a gulcha within the next four hours. He slept that night in a yurt, and the next day saw some more gulcha, one of which he killed

by a long shot of over three hundred yards. The head was a good one, and he brought it along on his second horse. On the third day, he and another Kirghiz crossed the Terekty and set off for the Bogusty which lay to the north-east, not due north, as we had been told. That night they slept out on the snow, and dined on gulcha and water. The next day one of the horses was done up, and as he belonged to the Kirghiz, the latter decided to stop as soon as they had crossed the second pass. This they did without much difficulty, as it is lower than the Terekty, and the snow was fairly hard. By a stroke of luck they came on a solitary yurt, the owner of which consented to let Labouchere have an ox, and a boy to act as guide, and also sold him some meat. Labouchere then had quite as rough a time as the caravan, but a good deal better luck, as he got his game, and he was not so long in getting to Narin.

On May 26th we, my party, struck up the valley and soon left the green behind us, and got into rocks. The climbing was very steep and difficult. Frequently we had to make our way across snow-drifts, and at 14,000 feet we got into a blizzard, and at once lost sight of the "akkar." We had to pitch our tent under a small pile of rock in the middle of it. Soon there was no sign of any track, nothing but an immense waste of brown and white hills with a line of snowy peaks beyond. In the morning the only living things in sight were a few crows and marmots. It was very hard to know what to do,

but after a discussion we settled to keep straight on north, and trust to striking the Bogusty Pass which was to take us down to Narin. So we rode on over the plateau which soon became free from snow, to show nothing better underneath than dull brown grass and the large shed horns of gulchas. Our first misfortune after this was the loss of our compass. I was cantering to a little hill to prospect when my horse shied at a rotting deer's head and fell. The saddle, which had been too loosely girthed, slipped round, and I came off and lost my reins. As luck would have it I had on a boot of Labouchere's, which was too big for the stirrup and stuck there, and the next minute my horse was careering over the plain dragging me behind. I escaped with a sprained ankle and a broken compass.

The cold was now intense, and we had only gulcha dung to make fires with at night. Our sole remaining provision was the lamb and some bread which had frozen so hard that it cut our gums. We had to drink snow-water as our tea had run out. We camped out in deep snow at the foot of the second range of mountains, and all night heard the avalanches falling. Also we could not get warm, so that it was generally unpleasant. The next day we had to make our way through soft snow. At every step the horses went in up to their bellies, and we up to our armpits. We barely covered half a mile in the hour. We had selected the most likely looking gap in the peaks, but before we had

gone far a great mass of snow came down with a noise like thunder on our right, and soon after another in front of us, so I thought it best to turn back. We struggled back in a pitiless wind to our last night's camping ground, and seemed face to face with a hopeless situation, for we had tried the mountains in the best place and they were absolutely impassable. The pass behind us was blocked, and there was no sign of any track or living creature. We had only four pounds of the lamb left, and a fragment of the petrified bread.

I then settled to follow up the Aksu to Chadir Kul, where the western pass might be open.

So we started off the next morning in fair spirits. We were absolutely hemmed in by icy peaks, and as we had not seen the sun for about four days, it was impossible to tell what direction we were moving in. However to-day it appeared, and I discovered that we were going W.S.W., which was approximately right for Chadir Kul, and at last, as we crossed a big dune, we caught sight of the lake glimmering in the distance. We were very glad to see it as it marked our position, and also there was now a chance of falling in with some Kirghiz and getting something to eat. This is what actually happened. We came to an encampment within a few hours, and then our troubles were over. After halting at several Kirghiz villages we rode into Narin on the 2nd of June. In the bazar I met Labouchere, who had been in Narin three days,

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The cold was now intense, and we had only gulcha dung to make fires with at night. Our sole remaining provision was the lamb and some bread which had frozen so hard that it cut our gums. We had to drink snow-water as our tea had run out. We camped out in deep snow at the foot of the second range of mountains, and all night heard the avalanches falling. Also we could not get warm, so that it was generally unpleasant. The next day we had to make our way through soft snow. At every step the horses went in up to their bellies, and we up to our armpits. We barely covered half a mile in the hour. We had selected the most likely looking gap in the peaks, but before we had

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The cold was now intense, and we had only gulcha dung to make fires with at night. Our sole remaining provision was the lamb and some bread which had frozen so hard that it cut our gums. We had to drink snow-water as our tea had run out. We camped out in deep snow at the foot of the second range of mountains, and all night heard the avalanches falling. Also we could not get warm, so that it was generally unpleasant. The next day we had to make our way through soft snow. At every step the horses went in up to their bellies, and we up to our armpits. We barely covered half a mile in the hour. We had selected the most likely looking gap in the peaks, but before we had

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and had sent some Cossacks up the Bogusty Pass to look for us.

This was our last journey on horseback, and we regretfully sold the saddles on which we had ridden over 4000 miles.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ACROSS THE STEPPE

NARIN lies on the river Narin in the great province of Semiretchinsk (Seven Rivers). It is said to have been the kingdom of Prester John, and is now inhabited by the Greater and Lesser Hordes of Kirghiz. To the south and east rise the Tian Shan and Altai Mountains, and to the north and west the dreary expanse of the Steppe. The Government of the Steppe includes the three divisions of Semipalatinsk, Semiretchinsk, and Akmolinsk, and the seat of administration is at Omsk, on the northern verge of the last-named province.

Omsk was our ultimate goal, as there we should strike the new Trans-Siberian Railway. But between Narin and Omsk lay 1600 miles of bare plain, the first 1100 of which had to be traversed in a post-cart, and the remainder on a small steamboat down the Irtysh. It took fourteen days to get to Omsk, which was an average of 110 miles a day, but as there were only two towns of any real interest on the road, there was no object in delaying by the way.

As soon as I reached Narin, after my very uncomfortable journey, Labouchere took me to lunch with the officer in command of the troops, Boujnikof. He and his wife were very glad to see us, as society in Narin is limited, to say the least of it. The town disputes with Osh the right to the title of "la fin du monde." It is a pretty little place, lying at the head of three valleys, with a public garden, some barracks, and one street of Russian shops which sell nothing useful. The altitude is 7500 feet, and all round are snow-covered peaks, but in summer the climate is equable, except for a tremendous wind which blows for four hours every afternoon. As soon as we had had our passports *visé*, we made arrangements to start. About one o'clock on June 3rd we set out in a common post-cart, or perekladnoi, and drove through a succession of green gorges thick with pine trees, and watered by rushing streams. We met several Kirghiz families by the way, changing their pasture grounds, and they all looked clean and prosperous. At midnight we arrived at a rough stage where driving was impossible, and leaving our cart we mounted two rough post-horses, and rode on the wooden saddles of the country. The baggage was strapped on to two other horses, and we set off in the darkness at a very fast trot along a narrow mountain path. Beneath us roared the river, and from above loose gravel came pouring down on our heads. The horses were by no means sure-footed, and we were not sorry when the unpleasant ride came to an end and we got into a sort of wooden box on wheels

to continue our drive. At dawn we crossed the highest point of another pass, about 10,000 feet high, and came down on Issik Kul, a great inland lake surrounded by mountains. At Tak Mak we experienced several dust storms, and at Pishpek we joined the main post road from Tashkend and began to get into the Steppe proper. Hitherto we had been going north, but now we turned east, and skirted the snow-capped range which fringes the northern edge of Issik Kul. To our left and in front lay vast rolling plains covered with coarse grass, barren of cultivation, and apparently of life, too. Once or twice we passed through valleys where the vegetation was plentiful, and where we saw black and pink merles, and some pretty little birds with green and orange-coloured plumage.

We reached Vierny very early on the morning of June 5th. The name is Вѣрны in Russian, but "Vierny" is the nearest pronunciation. It was originally the Kirghiz Almaty (apple heaven), then a Russian fort, then a Cossack encampment, and now it is a city with a Governor, a population of 30,000, and a garrison of 18,000. The ground is marshy, and the number of earthquakes recorded is prodigious. There is a Chinese quarter, but the greater part of the inhabitants are Kirghiz and Russians.

We had a most delightful visit here, for a M. Goret, the chief engineer of the town, entertained us royally, and introduced us to all the notables of the town. He took us to a service on an Imperial

birthday, and also showed us the troops. The Governor gave us duplicate padarojnas, or official posting orders, as Labouchere had settled to stay at a small town called Iliskoe, where he hoped he might get some tiger shooting, and I wanted to go on and see as much of the Nijni Exhibition as I could before arriving at St. Petersburg.

We started for Iliskoe that night, and arrived there early next morning. The basin of the Ili is the home of the Tungani Turanchi and Solon tribes, of Turko-Mongolian stock, but looking very like the Chinese. All the way from Vierny to Kuldja, this mixed brown and yellow type prevails. The river near Iliskoe is fringed with sand and jungle, reported to abound with tiger and boar, although we never came across either. After waiting two hours for the post, I went on alone over the Steppe, which was here made a little gay by clumps of yellow poppy. That evening I saw a perfect rainbow, a semicircle of the seven colours, dividing a red sky on the west from a blue one on the east. The effect was most striking. I drove all night, as that is the only way to make any progress when posting in Siberia; however, at the branch to Kuldja there were no horses, so I had to wait. A colonel of Cossacks was in the posthouse, and we talked about the town. It lies a hundred miles to the east of the Chinese frontier, and is supposed to be one of the most ancient cities in this part of Asia. The Russians occupied it in 1865, but the trade still remains in Chinese hands. When some new horses

came in I started off again along a muddy, ill-kept road, through a valley which simply swarmed with frogs. The little posthouses were clean, and the people pleasant, but the monotony of the road was intolerable.

Just outside Kopal I met the new Interpreter of the Russian Consulate at Kuldja. He was travelling with his wife to take up his appointment, and seemed a polished and well-educated man. In Russia the Consular and Diplomatic services are amalgamated, and the post of Interpreter or Dragoman ranks with that of Secretary. The consequence is that many of the diplomats in the lower grades are specialists, and serve nearly all their time in particular countries, gaining the advantages of close local knowledge, but suffering from a want of general experience.

The same Steppe, the same scattered groups of Kirghiz, the same little green villages and white posthouses, the same thunderstorm in the afternoon—how tired I got of them!

It was quite an event to pass a gang of convicts guarded by a battalion of soldiers, manacled, but accompanied by their wives and children. On the morning of the 10th we reached a small town called Sergiopol. On the right we could distinguish the great Altai chain, which runs east to the Chinese Seas, separating the gold mines of Siberia from those of Mongolia and Manchuria.

Sergiopol was my most easterly point. It is about 3700 miles from London, and lies almost exactly in the centre of Asia. The next place of importance

on the road was Semipalatinsk, to reach which we had to cross the river Irtysh. It is a clean, new town, with nothing of any interest in it. The population is about 40,000, of which half are Russians and half Kirghiz, and the town is the centre of an agricultural district. Herr von Ghern, one of the administrative officials, arranged for my passage on a boat leaving for Omsk on the morning of June 12th, and I started early. The boats are poor; they average seventy yards in length, and draw three feet. They are paddle-wheeled and worked by wood fuel, which has to be taken in every day, so that the maximum speed is never over seven miles an hour. The scenery along the banks is dull, and there are very few villages. Little freight seemed to be carried on our boat, but I was impressed by the merchant sailors, who seemed smart and handy men, thoroughly understanding their business. There is a *bonhomie* about Russian skippers which is fascinating, and they seem to be the friends and equals as well as the absolute masters of their crews. The ignorance of my captain of matters outside Russia was extraordinary. He asked me if French and German were the same language, and whether we used rouble notes in England? I got off the boat before the end of the journey as the pace became slower and slower, and took to the post again. The villages on the road had now entirely changed their character. The yurt was left behind, and instead there were wooden huts with sloping red-tiled roofs on each side of a

long grass street. We were in Siberia proper, and the barren Steppe was passed. I crossed the boundary of the province of Akmolinsk, and after passing three salt lakes overhung by clouds of ferocious gnats, reached Omsk early on the 17th June, having posted 1600 miles in a fortnight.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY

It is 550 miles from Omsk to the frontier of Russia in Europe, and about the same distance thence to Samara. At Samara one strikes the Volga, up which I intended to go *viâ* Kazan to Nijni Novgorod, and from there by rail to Moscow. I got into Omsk by the post at 11 A.M., and put up at the Evropiski Stoloviya, a queer little lodging-house, but fairly comfortable. As the train did not start west until midnight on the 18th, I occupied myself with seeing the town, which is after the regulation Siberian pattern, only rather larger. Everything is whitewashed, except the roofs which are green, and the church domes which are a vivid blue. The majority of the houses are built of wood, but there are a few of stone, the best of which are the Governor's Palace, the Barracks, and the College of the Corps of Cadets. New streets are being laid out, and building is continually going on, but the sandy or grass street and the plank huts in the poorer quarters of the town still give Omsk an old-world look. Its population is 60,000, mainly

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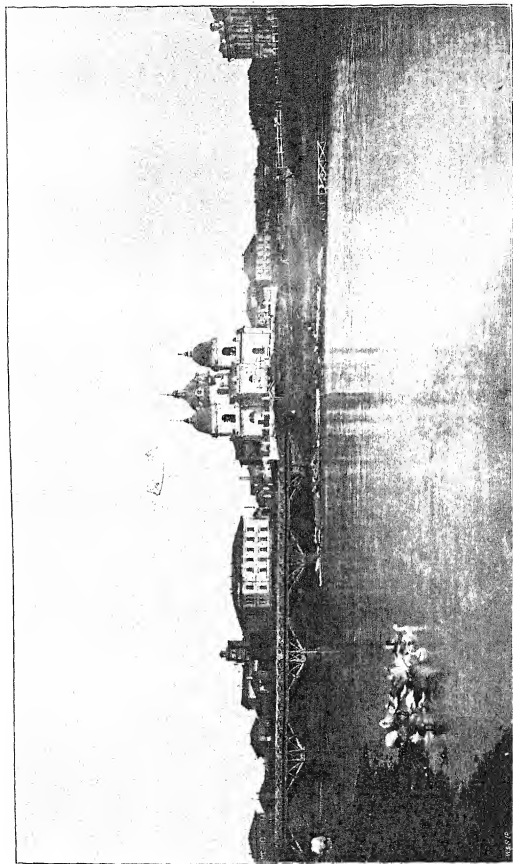
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Russians. Still, as a Russian said to me, it is only "*báls'haya derévn'ya*" (a large village). Its position at the junction of the Irtysh and the new railway has increased its importance of late, and Tobolsk, the old capital of Western Siberia, has declined. My helmet caused some excitement in the streets, so I bought a hat before I got into the train which was to take me out of Asia. Krasnoyarsk, 700 miles further east, was then the terminus, but the line is now nearly at Irkutsk, the capital of Eastern Siberia, about 1500 miles east of Omsk, so that half of the immense project of spanning a continent is already accomplished. When the whole railway is finished, which it should be by the end of the century, one will be able to go by train from St. Petersburg to Vladivostock, or wherever the Pacific terminus may be placed, in eleven days, traversing a distance of 6000 miles. At present the Trans-Siberian railway starts from Cheliabinsk in the Urals, where it connects with the trunk line from Petersburg *viâ* Moscow and Samara. From Cheliabinsk it goes east to Omsk, and then east-north-east by Tomsk to Krasnoyarsk. Here it runs south-east to Irkutsk on the shores of Lake Baikal. The direction it will follow from Irkutsk to the sea is now finally and officially determined on. The original scheme was to skirt the northern Chinese frontier through the Baikal Amur and Pri-amur provinces to Vladivostock, but this has been superseded for a line from Stretensk through the Chinese province of Manchuria by Tsi-tsi-har to

Vladivostock. A straight south-easterly line however from Irkutsk to the Gulf of Pechili through Mongolia only measures 1000 miles. Probably when the communication to the ocean is established the line will be further extended. The scheme of building a railway across Asia is a magnificent one, and so far it has been magnificently carried out. Everything I saw on the line was big, and sound, and solid. The lines were good and well laid; the bridges though only of wood were well built and served their purpose excellently; the rolling stock very fair; the buffets at the station were well managed if not luxurious, and the officials were well organised. Last, but not least, a more punctual train service one could not hope for anywhere.

No doubt the running of the line through Manchuria means that Manchuria will become some day an integral part of the Russian Empire, but that may eventually mean as great a benefit to the world at large as to the power of Russia. Eastern Siberia, Manchuria and Mongolia have an intrinsic value which cannot be overlooked. The mountainous strip, which runs from Semipalatinsk to the Pacific Ocean, has on either side of it the treasures of Asia. With the exception of the desert of Gobi, the whole country abounds in gold, silver, platinum, iron, copper and coal. The Russians have begun to work some of the mines in the Amur and Baikal provinces, and the few firms which possess mining rights are rapidly making colossal fortunes. In Manchuria, even the Chinese, with the most

primitive plants and elementary methods of mining, manage to make large profits. When the proceeds have filtered through the sticky hands of Taiotais and Mandarins, the Imperial Exchequer still receives a big sum, which can only be explained by the extraordinary amount of ore existing.

I saw at the Pan-Russian Exhibition the results of mining in the Ural and Altai mountains. The gold produced by various districts was represented by immense gilded globes. I will quote one, not by any means the largest. It was the globe of the district of Nerchinsk in Eastern Siberia, with an area of about 100,000 square miles. In the last thirty years it had produced 170 tons of gold, equivalent to over £19,000,000 sterling. From the chart the district appears to have been sounded in very few localities, so that it might be assumed that at least treble the given amount could have been raised. At present private companies are allowed to rent and work the mines; they pay all the gold found into the Fiscal Department, and receive back the value in money, less a royalty of fifteen per cent. The gold is generally got by the washing process through crushing, and mercury evaporation is also resorted to.

To return to my journey. We started at midnight on June 18th, and running along the northern border of Akmolinsk, soon got into the province of Tobolsk, also called Western Siberia. The country is very pretty, consisting of valleys

well wooded and watered, and acres of reclaimed marshland, thickly cultivated, and dotted with little Siberian towns built of wood, with the usual grass street, and gaudy little church. The women are ugly, but the men, with their long bony faces, bright yellow hair and blue eyes, picturesque. In this part of the country the Kirghiz element has almost entirely disappeared.

At Zlatoust and Cheliabinsk we got into the Ural Mountains, having passed through the northern part of the Government of Orenberg, where there is the terminus of the railway from Samara which is one day to be continued to Tashkend. The landscape here looked like something in a fairy tale. There were great boulders of rock twisted into fanciful shapes, and copses of burnt pine trees with brown streams running through them from the hills above. The journey was not by any means devoid of interest, and my companions were as varied as they were pleasant. There was a colonel from Tomsk, a kind old gentleman who talked the worst French I ever heard in my life, and was accompanied by a wife with two Persian cats which she treated like children. There was a lieutenant who had travelled, so he told me, from "beyond Vladivostock," where he was quartered, for 125 roubles (£12), a distance of 5000 miles. There was a railway doctor who was so ill all the time that he could not leave his *coupé*. He was travelling free and in great style, but directly we got into Europe he disappeared into unofficial life and a third-class carriage. There was a medical professor

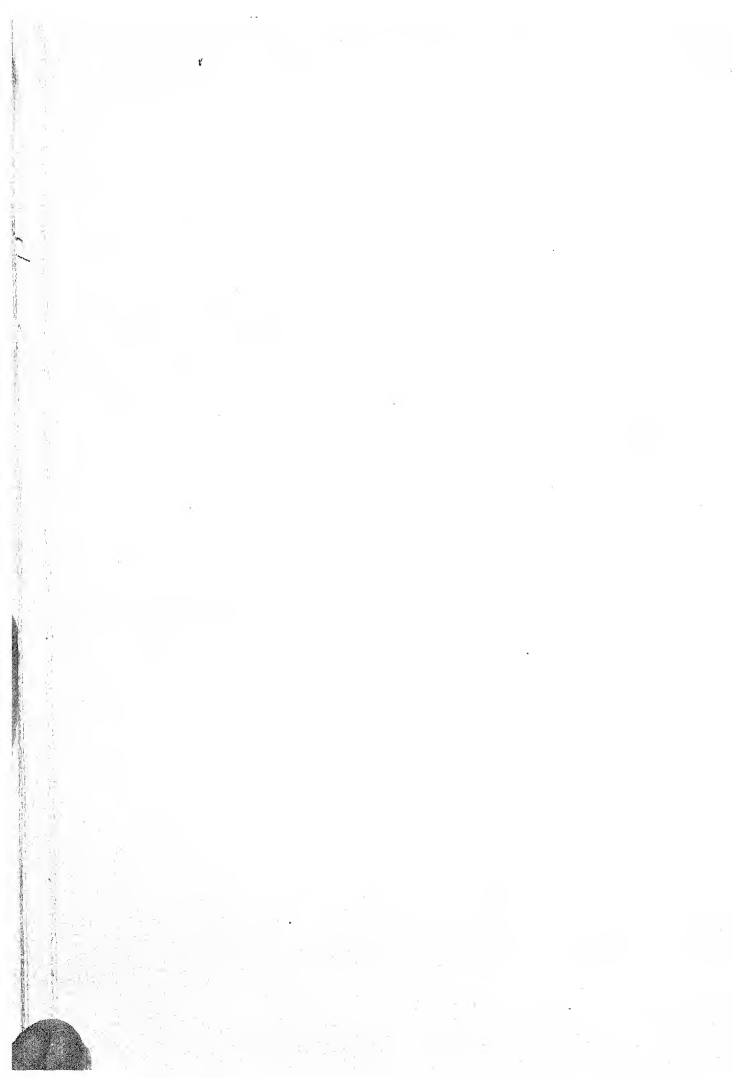
from Tomsk going to a conference at Berlin, a well-informed and capable man. There were two newspaper correspondents, Poles, who could talk every language under heaven. There was a gold mining *entrepreneur* who wanted to sell me the freehold of half Siberia; and an engineer of Hebrew extraction full of money and information. Next came a military jurist, an officer kept in a regiment simply to "tell off" prisoners. Lastly, there was the Chief Mollah of Troiska, a Kirghiz who talked fairly good Turkish. He sat cross-legged on his side of the carriage saying his prayers, although his gestures of devotion were a little put out of gear by the motion of the train, and he had the greatest difficulty in keeping himself facing Mecca. We passed several trains full of "Little Russians," the inhabitants of South-West Russia, who had volunteered to go as colonists into Siberia. Subsequently, on the Volga, I came across a shipful of convicts. They seemed to be treated well. For two or three years the worst offenders have to do hard manual labour, men and women together. No doubt the life, especially in the northern mines, is hard, but the guards are by no means devoid of sympathy. One of the engineers told me, we foreigners ought to remember that the gaolers were men too, and not devils. He had just come from a great convict district, and no doubt he was speaking the truth. After the prisoners have completed their hard labour, they are drafted into the districts round Irkutsk, where they become colonists. They work at different trades,



for which they are paid, and possess all the rights of ordinary citizens except that of returning to Russia. "Suspects" after their term of probation can purge their crime and come back, although very often they prefer to stay on in their new home, and their children become Siberiaks or indigenous inhabitants of the land. No stigma attaches to the prisoners for their offences, and they are received according to their former social positions, while not a few of them make fortunes and attain to high administrative posts. In reality the whole system is very like our old transportation one, and serves to colonise the immense steppes and mountains of Siberia. The plan frees Russia of the most dangerous class of her inhabitants, and it fills Siberia with harmless and hard-working people, for Nihilism cannot flourish here.

We entered European Russia on the 30th of June. I had been in Asia eleven months, in which time I had travelled 8217 miles, 4008 of which I had ridden on horseback. We got to Samara on the 21st, and there I took steamer up the Volga to Kazan and Nijni Novgorod. The Volga is now connected with all the river systems of Russia, and is thus its main waterway, acting as a link between the Caspian, Baltic and Arctic Seas. The last eighty miles north of the Caspian are generally frozen in the winter months, but all the rest of the year there is a good current, and boats drawing five feet can always navigate the river. Four good steamship companies working their boats by naphtha carry on the traffic, which is very considerable.

Samara is an ugly town, but from its position at the junction of the waterway and trunk line, a rising commercial centre. Kazan, a Tartar town, presents a pleasant contrast to it, with its ancient rambling cathedral and red brick clock-tower. Nijni Novgorod, in addition to its surpassing historical interest, has a great mercantile importance, as being the scene of the Yearly Fair where East and West exchange wares. I stayed there a few days to see the Exhibition, and then went on to Moscow, where Labouchere caught me up after having had no luck with the tigers. On June 26th I arrived at St. Petersburg, and a few weeks later I returned to London having been absent a year and one month.



## GLOSSARY OF WORDS

P. = Persian.

R. = Russian.

T. = Turkish.

*Ajem.* The Turkish word for Persia or "recruit," lit. barbarous. T.

*Amir.* Prince; or holy. P. T.

*Amirzadeh.* Prince's son; hence Mirza. P. T.

*Amir-i-tuman.* General, lit. Prince of ten thousand. P.

*Araba.* A cart. T.

*Ark.* A citadel or palace. P.

*Bagh.* A garden. P. T.

*Balakhoneh.* The upper room in a Persian posthouse. P.

*Bashibozuk.* An irregular. T.

*Batcha.* A servant. P.

*Beg or Bey.* Lord. P. T.

*Beglerbegi.* Chieftain. P.

*Binbashi.* Lieutenant-colonel; lit. Head of a thousand. T.

*Buyuruldu.* A written order for escort and horses, given by a Vali. T.

*Caravan.* A number of horses, camels or mules going a journey. P. T.

*Caravanserai.* A place where caravans halt for the night. Generally a stone or mud building with empty doorless rooms and stables inside. P.

*Carass.* An armed Mussulman attendant on a Consul. T.

*Chapfer.* The post system in Persia. P.

- Chapkerkhaneh.* A posthouse. P.  
*Chavadar.* A man with horses or mules to let ; also a groom or driver. P.  
*Chawush.* A sergeant. T.  
*Chin.* The official hierarchy in Russia. R.  
*Chinovnik.* A member of the above. R.  
*Demir Yol.* A railroad. T.  
*Effendi.* Lord or Sir, practically = Mister. T.  
*Farrash.* A Persian Governor's attendant ; lit. carpet spreader. P.  
*Farsakh.* The distance a loaded mule goes in an hour.  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 miles, anc. parasang. P.  
*Firengi.* Any European except a Russian (from anc. Frank). P. T.  
*Firengistân.* Europe, excepting Russia. P. T.  
*Gasténitsa.* A hotel. R.  
*Gholam.* A servant or messenger. P.  
*Gopher.* A round tub-boat used on the Tigris. T.  
*Gulcha.* An ovis poli. (Turki.)  
*Haj.* A pilgrimage, particularly that to Mecca. P. T.  
*Hajji.* A pilgrim, particularly any one who has been to Mecca. P. T.  
*Hakeem.* A doctor. P. T.  
*Hâkim.* A Persian Governor. P.  
*Imam.* In Persian, a saint ; in Turkish, a priest.  
*Imamzadeh.* A shrine. P.  
*Ingiliz.* English. P. T.  
*Iran.* Persia. P.  
*Jami.* A mosque. T.  
*Juma.* Friday. P. T.  
*Kaimakam.* Governor of a town. T.  
*Kalatch.* A pigskin raft, used on the Tigris. T.  
*Kaleh.* A tower or fort. P.  
*Kalian.* A water pipe. P.  
*Kedkhoda.* Head man of a village. P.  
*Keui.* A village. T.  
*Keupru.* A bridge. T.

*Khalifah.* The Caliph or head of the Sunni, or orthodox Mussulmans; at present the Sultan of Turkey, lit. Successor. P. T.

*Khan.* { In Turkey, an inn or caravanserai.  
 { In Persia = lord and corresponds to Bey in Turkey.

*Kharab.* A ruin. P.

*Khorgine.* A skin or leather saddle-bag. P. T.

*Kilissa.* A Christian church. T.

*Kopeck.* A Russian copper coin, value about a farthing. R.

*Kran.* A Persian silver coin, value  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$  at the time we were in Persia. P.

*Lira.* A Turkish gold coin value 19s. 2d. T.

*Masjid.* A mosque. P.

*Mehalah.* A sailing boat. T.

*Mejidieh.* A Turkish silver coin, value 4s. 2d. Also a Turkish decoration. T.

*Mir Alai.* Colonel of a regiment. T.

*Mirza.* { Before the name = Mister.  
 { After the name = Prince. P.  
 { Alone it means a scribe.

*Mollah.* A priest. P. T.

*Moujik.* A peasant. R.

*Mulazam.* A lieutenant. T.

*Munshi.* A secretary. P.

*Mushir.* A Field-marshal. T.

*Mussafir Oda.* A guest-room. T.

*Mutessarif.* Governor of a district or sanjak. T.

*Naiib.* Postmaster, lit. deputy. P.

*Nawab.* Prince—an Indian title. P.

*Oblast.* A province. R.

*Onbashi.* A corporal, lit. Head of ten. T.

*Padarojna.* An imperial order for posthorses. R.

*Padshah.* A king or emperor. P. T.

*Pasha.* A prince, the first title in the Turkish hierarchy. T.

*Perekladnoi.* A Russian post cart. R.

*Pul.* Bridge-money. P.

- Ramazan.* The fasting month of the Mohammedan year. P. T.  
*Rayah.* A Christian subject of the Sultan. T.  
*Rouble.* A Russian paper or silver coin, value 2s. 1d. R.  
*Rûm.* The Oriental name for Turkey.
- Sâdr Azâm.* The Grand Vizier. P. T.  
*Samovar.* An urn for boiling water. R.  
*Sanjak.* A district. T.  
*Sarbaz.* A foot soldier, lit. "One who gambles his head." P.  
*Sartib.* A colonel. P.  
*Serai.* In Turkish, a palace; in Persian, an inn.  
*Serasker.* The War Minister. T.  
*Seyid.* A descendant of the Prophet. P.  
*Shahi.* A Persian copper coin value about a farthing. P.  
*Shazadeh.* A royal prince, lit. "Son of a king." P.  
*Sherif.* Holy. A name applied to descendants of the Prophet. T.  
*Shiah.* The smaller section of Islam followed by the Persians and some of the Indians. P. T.  
*Sowar.* A cavalryman. P.  
*Stanzie.* A posthouse. R.  
*Stârosta.* A postmaster. R.  
*Sunni.* The larger and orthodox section of Islam followed by the Turks, Arabs and Africans. P. T.
- Tarantass.* A private post carriage. R.  
*Teskereh.* An ordinary travelling passport issued by the police. T.  
*Troika.* The three horses that are harnessed into a post cart and go one stage. R.  
*Tuman.* A Persian sum of money value about 4s., lit. ten thousand (dinars). P.  
*Turbah.* A tomb. P.  
*Ûlitsa.* A street. R.
- Vali.* A Governor-General. T.  
*Valiahâd.* The Crown Prince. P.  
*Vekil.* A deputy. P. T.  
*Vekil i Dowlet.* A consular agent. P.  
*Villayet.* A province under a Vali. T.  
*Vodka.* A cheap spirit. R.

*Yabu.* A packhorse. P.

*Yaver.* A major. T.

*Yemshik.* A post driver. R.

*Yuzbashi.* A captain, lit. Head of a hundred. T.

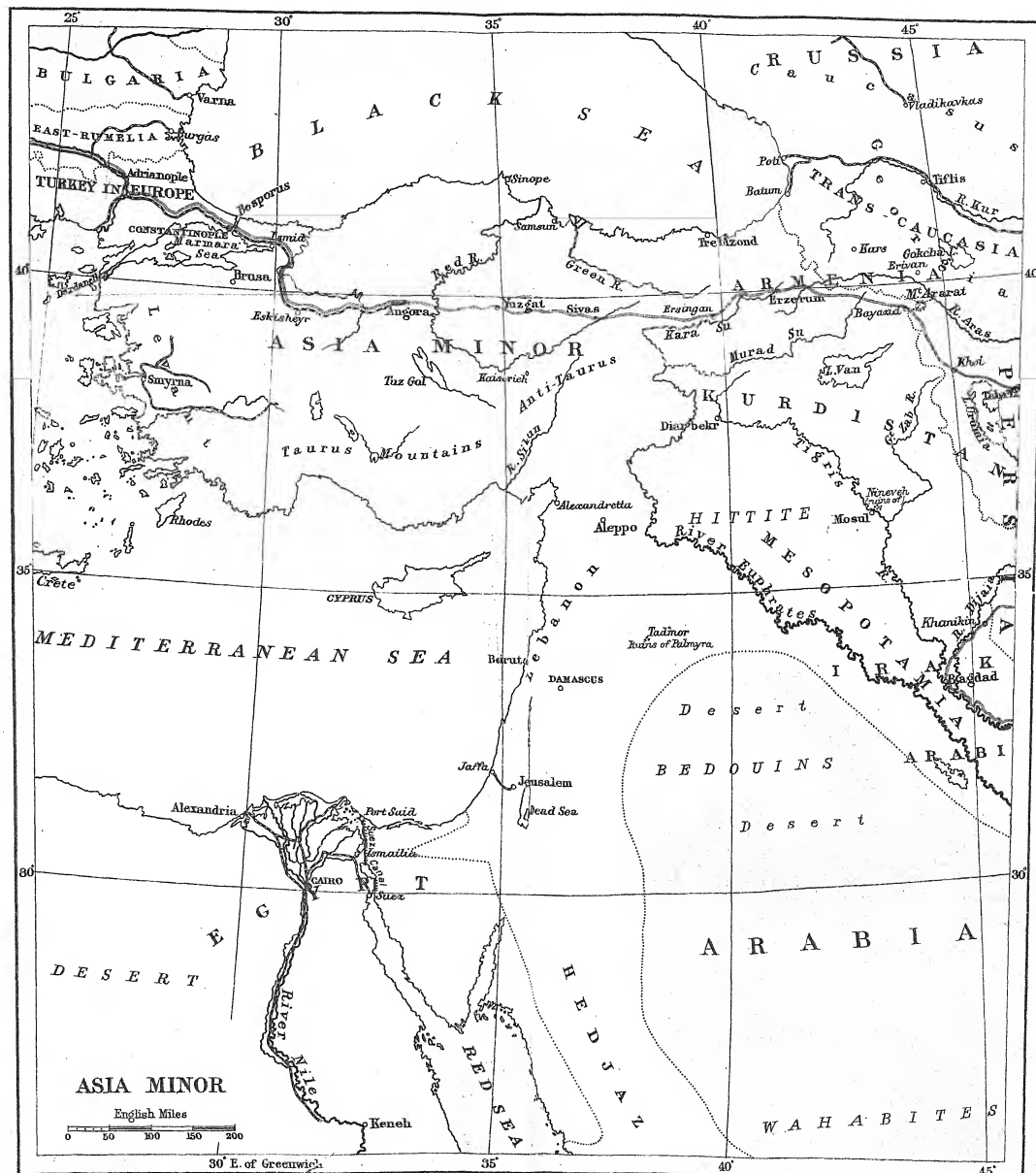
*Yurt.* A Kirghiz tent made of hides stretched on a basket frame.  
(Turki.)

*Zaptieh.* An irregular cavalryman, something resembling our  
mounted constabulary (in idea). T.

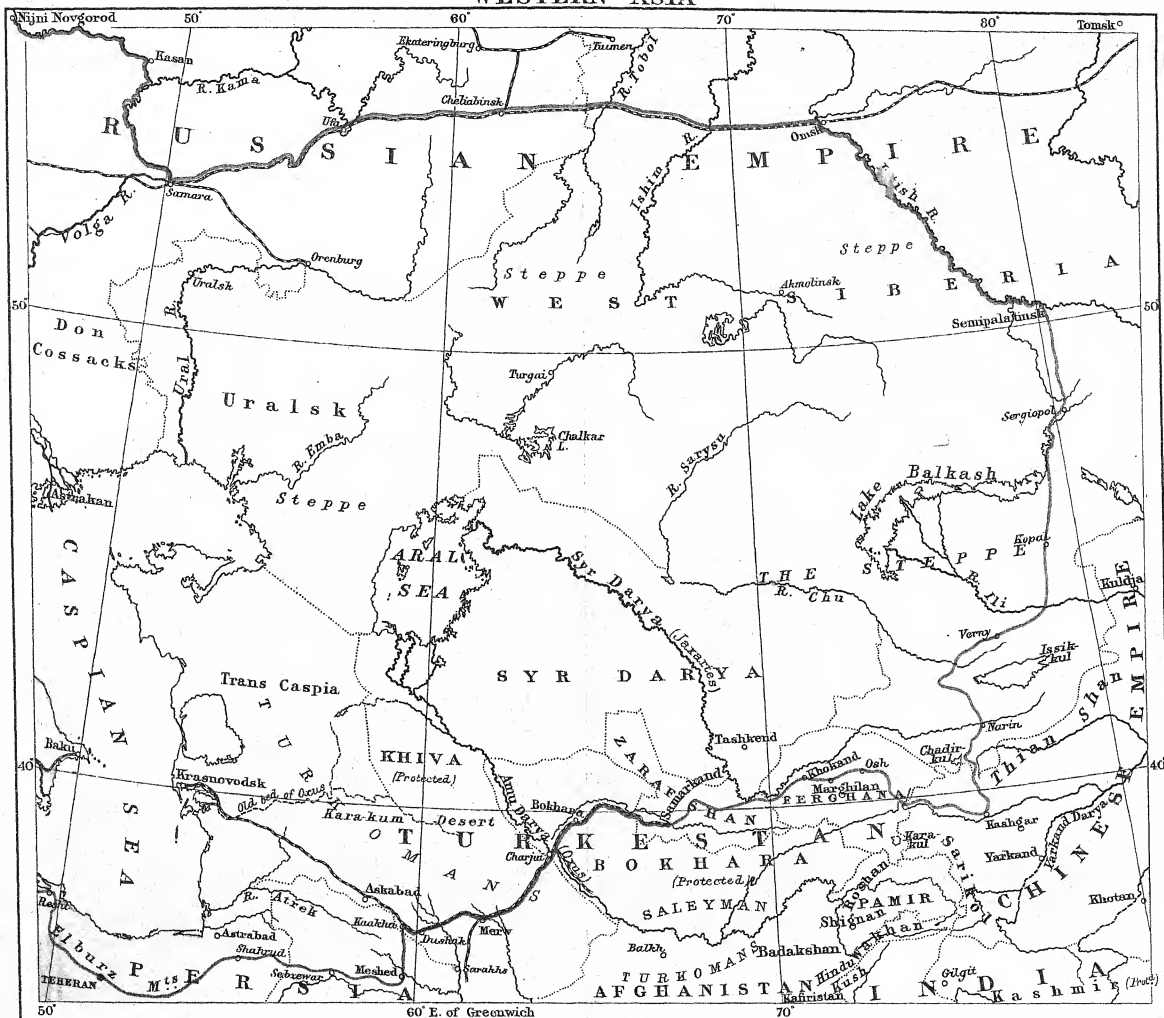
NOTE.—Pronounce u = oo }  
a = á } as in French.  
i = ee }

Many of the words marked P. 'T. are of course really Arabic.





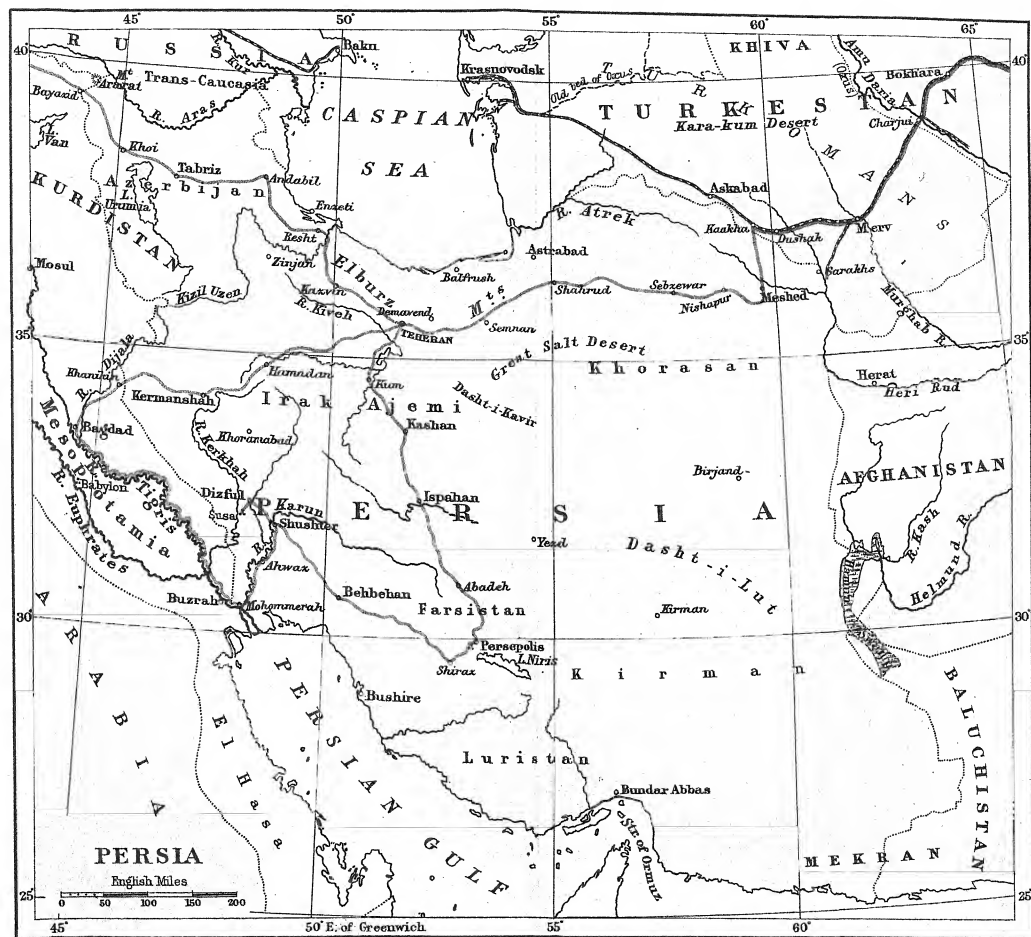
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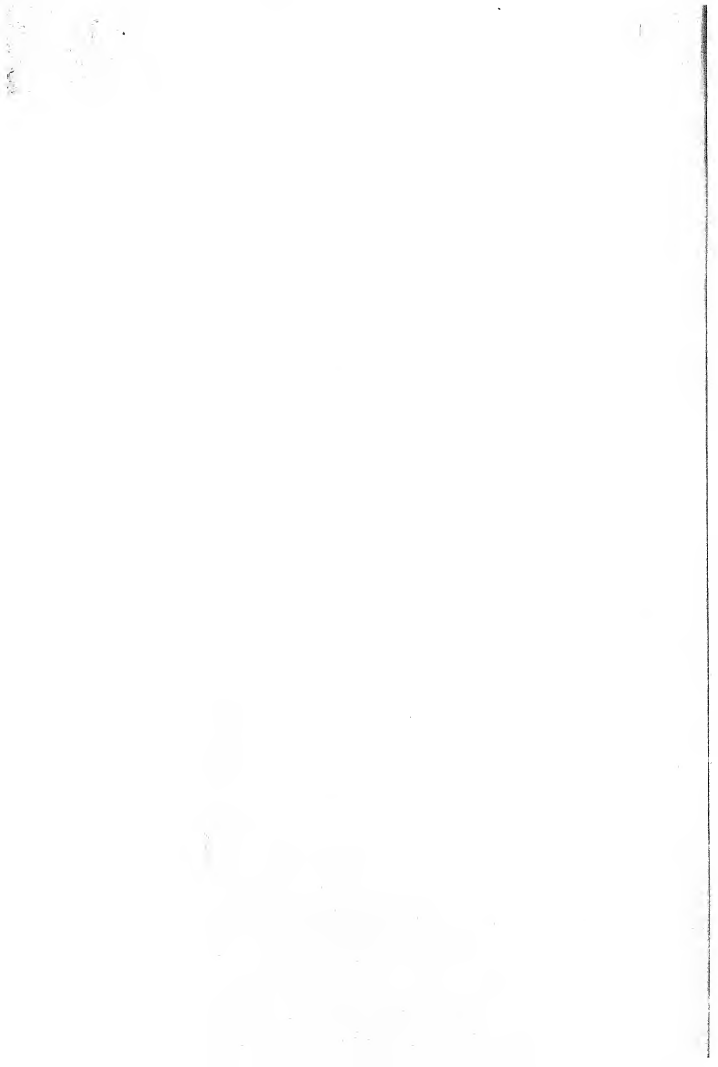
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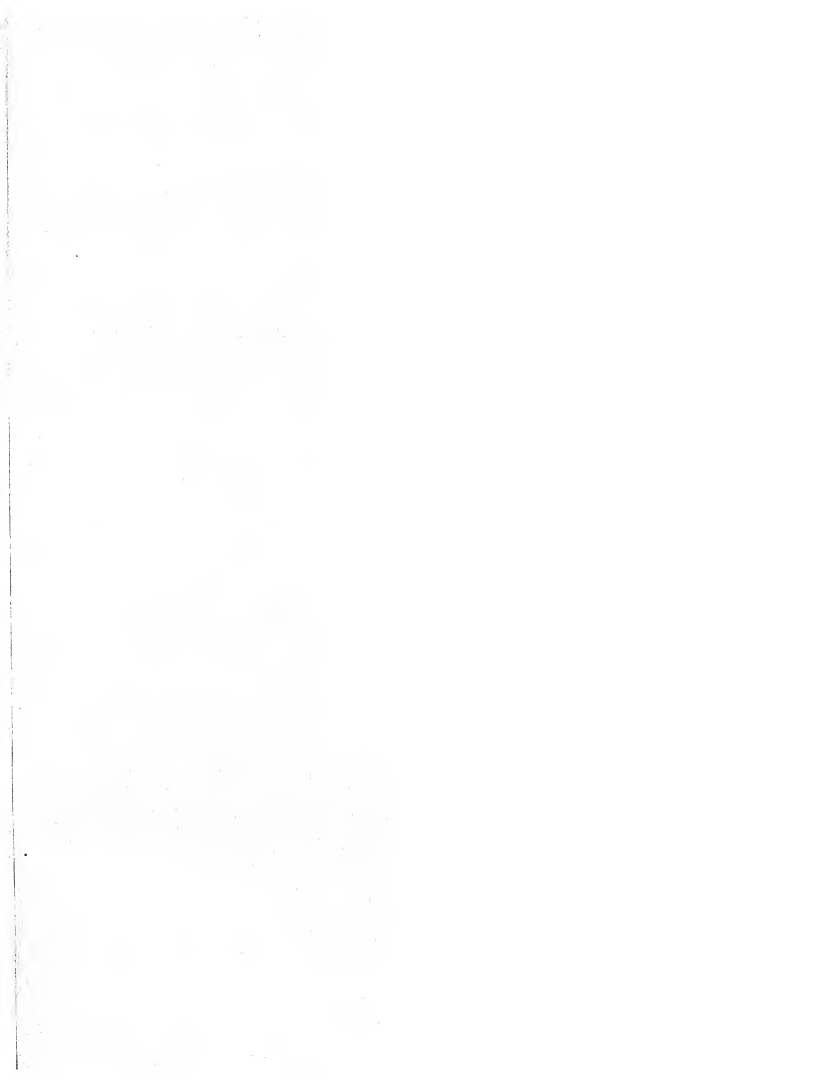
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